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Experiences of the Process and Outcomes of Group Dream Work

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EXPERIENCES OF THE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES
OF GROUP DREAM WORK

by

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ABSTRACT

EXPERIENCES OF THE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES OF GROUP DREAM WORK

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Old Dominion University, 2013
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Clients often wish to discuss their dreams in counseling sessions in order to make sense of their waking experiences. Although the efficacy of dream work has been indicated in numerous studies, other studies indicate that a majority of therapists report a lack of knowledge in working with dreams. The purpose of this qualitative heuristic design study was to explore the experiences of individuals participating in dream work groups that use the Ullman method as a foundation for exploring and finding meaning and waking life relevance from dreams. The Ullman method features a series of structured steps in which all group members participate in assisting the group member who shares a dream in finding its meaning. After researcher immersion in the topic, seven participants were recruited through criterion and snowball sampling methods. Triangulated data sources included face-to-face individual interviews, written journal entries, and creative art responses with accompanying written artist statements. Six major themes emerged from the analysis of the data: Parameters, Space, Inner Activations, Connections, Transformations, and Integrations. Results of this study indicate that participants experienced beneficial outcomes whether they were engaged in the process as a “dreamer” or person sharing a dream, or as a group member assisting others to find meaning in their dreams. Findings also indicate that life issues addressed and resolved through group dream work are similar to issues that clients bring to counseling sessions.

DEDICATION

To Montague Ullman (1916-2008), whose experiential dream group method provided the foundation and structure for the experiences of group dream work.

To Clark Moustakas (1923-2012), whose heuristic research design provided the vehicle to translate the inherently invisible experiences of group dream work into visible form.

To the seven participants - Treasure Hunter, Investigator, Sacred Space Dream Worker, Compassionate Dream Worker, Integrator, Catalyst, and Energizer - who so generously and enthusiastically shared their inner and outer experiences of group dream work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Research Problem

Although the interpretation of dreams for the purposes of insight, guidance, and healing has been in existence since at least the beginning of recorded history, the practice of utilizing dreams for psychological healing in modern psychotherapy came to the forefront only at the beginning of the twentieth century with the 1900 publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud's seminal work on the psychoanalytic theory of the purpose and meaning of dreams. With the opening of this door, other psychoanalytic theorists such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Fritz Perls soon developed their own theories and methods of working with dreams in therapy with individuals and groups (Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994). In the latter part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, humanistic, eclectic, and integrated theories and models of working with dreams have emerged (Alperin, 2004; Koch, 2009; Lamb & Hollis, 1994; Marszalek & Myers, 2006; Mellick, 2001; Shuttleworth-Jordan, Saayman, & Faber, 1988; Taylor, 2009; Ullman, 2006).

These newer models and ways of working with dreams have become more and more accessible and comprehensible for therapists and laypeople alike. There has been a growing interest in these methods that no longer require years of specialized training for therapists in psychoanalytic methods, nor years of intensive psychodynamic therapy for clients (Coholic & LeBreton, 2007). A review of the current literature reflected that people often wished to discuss their dreams in counseling sessions in order to make sense of their waking experiences (Crook & Hill, 2003; Marszalek & Myers, 2006; Pesant &

Zandra, 2004). Thirteen studies cited by Crook and Hill (2003) indicated the efficacy of dream work. Extensive reviews by Pesant and Zandra (2004) corroborated these findings. Crook and Hill (2003) found that most therapists in their study reported a lack of knowledge in working with dreams other than listening to the clients' recounting of their dreams. Pesant and Zandra (2004) concurred that therapists, even though interested in working with dreams, felt unprepared to do so.

At the same time, the literature has revealed a consistent and steady interest in working with dreams within group settings, including therapy groups, personal growth groups, and dedicated dream work groups (Berube, 1999; Clark, 1994; Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Coholic & LeBreton, 2007; Falk & Hill, 1995; Flowers & Zebwen, 1996; Friedman, 2000; Kautner, 2005; Krippner, Gabel, Green, & Rubien, 1994; Moss, 2002; Provost, 1999; Sarlin, 1991; Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1995; Toombs & Toombs, 1985; Ullman, 2006; Wolk, 1996; Wright, Ley, & French, 1994). The Ullman experiential dream group method (Ullman, 1994, 2006) has also been used to teach dream work methods to counseling and psychology students in college and university settings (Freeman & Vogel, 2005; Stimson, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of individuals participating in dream work groups that use the Ullman method (Ullman, 1994, 2006) as a foundation for exploring and finding meaning and waking life relevance from dreams. The group methods could incorporate additional elements such as expressive arts (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Mellick, 2001), focusing (Gendlin, 1986), active imagination (Johnson, 1986), or authentic movement (Mason, 2009). The findings from this study provide a rich source of information and practical knowledge for counselors on the process of

group dream work itself, and especially on how clients may experience beneficial outcomes related to the process.

Summary of Relevant Literature

Group Dream Work

Difference in therapy groups and dream groups. Although a therapist may lead dream groups and the groups may lead to personal growth and healing, there are marked theoretical differences between the two types of groups (Shuttleworth-Jordan, Saayman, & Faber, 1988; Toombs & Toombs, 1985; Ullman, 1990). The roles of the dreamer, group leader, and group members are clearly defined in a dream work group. Most of the interpersonal interaction in a dream work group focuses on the dream content and is geared towards problem-solving, not the intrapersonal processes or the interpersonal interactions among group members (Shuttleworth-Jordan et al., 1988; Toombs & Toombs, 1985).

Toombs and Toombs (1985) stated that as opposed to the confrontation common in group therapy, the sense of safety and security fostered by dream work group structure invited self-disclosure and quick involvement by group members. Feinberg (1981) described the dream group as “easier, less volatile, and more enjoyable,” and at the same time affirming to self-disclosure (p. 509). Provost (1999) wrote that in terms of group development, the shared goals of processing dreams tended to facilitate quick movement into self-exploration, interpersonal sharing, and group cohesiveness. Ullman (1990) explained that in formal therapy, the therapist controlled the dream interpretation process. In contrast, in the experiential dream group, the leader (if there were one) served not as a

therapist, but to insure the group followed the process, and also had the option of sharing a dream as a group member.

Ullman experiential dream work groups. Montague Ullman (1916-2008), a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist, first developed the experiential dream group model in 1974 in order to teach psychiatric interns how to approach dreams with their patients (Ullman, 1994). As this model was educational rather than therapeutic, it allowed the students to share their dreams and learn techniques experientially in a psychologically safe environment. The Ullman experiential dream group has been used solely as developed and has served as the foundation for many dream work groups. Examples of the Ullman method of group dream work reviewed in the literature include empirical studies (Kautner, 2005; Meyer, 1980; Sarlin, 1991), as well as descriptive case studies and methodological reviews (Krippner, Gabel, Green, & Rubien, 1994; Provost, 1999; Stimson, 2009; Taylor, 1983, 2009; Toombs & Toombs, 1985; Wolk, 1996). Provost (1999) specifically recommended that the Ullman method be used continuously with any other methods, as it was an effective way to actively involve all members of the group in the process.

Outcomes of Dream Work

Outcomes of individual dream work. Clara E. Hill and her associates have conducted the most extensive empirical research on utilizing dreams in therapy, specifically using the Hill cognitive-experiential model (Hill, 2003; Pesant & Zandra, 2004). The Hill model (Hill, 1996, 2004) includes three stages: exploring the dream, finding insight, and taking action. These three stages are comparable to parts of the Ullman group method (Ullman, 1994, 2006) in which group members first assist the

dreamer to explore the dream in detail, then to make associations with the images and metaphors, and then to apply the dream's meaning to waking life. The projective element from the Ullman method, in which group members make associations with another person's dream as if it were their own, is included in three of the studies of the Hill model (Falk & Hill, 1995; Hill, Diemer, Hess, Hillyer, & Seeman, 1993; Kolchakian & Hill, 2002). Hill (2003) gave a general overview of the results of 17 studies: Results indicated that dream work is effective with clients, it is suitable for a wide variety of people, its success depends on client and therapist factors, and it can be valuable as a stand-alone therapeutic tool even in a single session. In their extensive review of empirical research on the outcomes of dream work in therapy, Pesant and Zandra (2004) highlighted two major findings –that exploring dreams can help clients gain insight and better self-understanding, and that working collaboratively on dreams increases clients' engagement in therapy.

Outcomes of group dream work. The results of a quantitative study of divorced or separated women who participated in eight weekly dream groups suggested positive gains: increased insight into their dreams, the ability to take positive action from their awareness, and increased self-esteem (Falk & Hill, 1995). It is notable that this study included the projective element from the Ullman method, in which group members make associations with another person's dream as if it were their own. In a qualitative study of six oncology nurses participating in an eight week dream group, Cohen and Bumbaugh (2004) found post-group (one and six months) themes of the healing factors of group dream work; themes included insight, introspection, awareness about self, creativity and self-direction, the value of dream work that wasn't apparent at the time of the work, a

sense of discovery and continued learning, and “ ‘dream work gets to the core faster than traditional [approaches]’ ” (p.820). Coholic and Breton’s (2007) qualitative study of the connection between group dream work and spirituality indicated that dream work was helpful to participants in gaining new insight and self-awareness, that dream images represented current waking life issues, and that group dream work was a positive, relaxing, and even fun way to process serious issues.

In a qualitative phenomenological study of nine older people participating in an eight-week Ullman dream work group, Kautner (2005) reported that participants were surprised to experience a high degree of perceptiveness, sensitivity, and caring from the co-dreamers (*group members*), whom they had not previously met or known. The results of this study also indicated that combining people with different personalities in dream groups positively affected dream sharing and had the potential to create connections among diverse populations. Results of a two-year pilot study of an Ullman dream group suggested that medical students benefited from lower ongoing stress as they developed a cohesive, supportive group in which they shared common concerns through their dream work (Sarlin, 1991).

Conceptual Framework

The key constructs of interest for this study are the practice of discussing and engaging with one’s own dreams and the dreams of others for the purposes of insight and healing, and the processes and outcomes of this dream work for individuals participating in dream groups using the Ullman method (1994, 2006) as a foundation. In this structure, group participants have an opportunity to engage fully with their own and others’ dreams, to find meaning for themselves and to assist group members to find meaning in their

respective dreams. In this study, I explore the experiences of individuals from each viewpoint – from presenting one’s own dream to the group for assistance in finding meaning, and from assisting group members to find meaning in their dreams. I also explore the participants’ experiences of the group facilitator or group leader if there is one. The relationship of these constructs provides valuable information in exploring the meaning and essence of the participants’ experience of group dream work, which in turn provides important knowledge to counselors or therapists wishing to use dream work with their clients.

Rationale for the Study

In their extensive review of empirical and clinical dream work literature, Pesant and Zandra (2004) reported results that indicated dream work could promote beneficial personal client outcomes as well as beneficial outcomes for the counseling process. They suggested that more research would be necessary in order to identify the specific factors from the process of dream work that lead to beneficial outcomes for clients. Coholic and Breton (2007) wrote that there is a growing interest and need for dream work processes that do not require years of training for therapists or years of expensive therapy for clients. Falk and Hill (1995) studied group dream interpretation for women in the midst of divorce or marital separation. In their recommendations for further studies they suggested that a comparison of group dream work models might show the most effective models. They went on to say that because of their experiences of enthusiasm from clients and therapists about group dream interpretation, further studies were clearly warranted.

Patton (2002) wrote that qualitative methods are naturalistic in that data is gathered from real world settings without pre-set conditions as there were in laboratory or

controlled studies. Crook and Hill (2003), when discussing 15 studies, noted they were all conducted in laboratory settings. In addition, the majority of the quantitative dream work research studies from the literature took place in academic settings. The qualitative studies and conceptual articles in the current literature are primarily descriptive of short-term dream work groups or of dream work classes again primarily in an academic setting.

A systematic and thorough qualitative study of the lived experiences of the process and outcomes of dream work from the perspective of people experiencing it in actual on-going group dream work sessions adds a different and important perspective to the knowledge in this field. A heuristically designed study of the essential meaning of experiencing these processes and outcomes may lead to a synthesis that describes the inter-related actions in the dream work process that participants experience as meaningful and integral to positive outcomes from group dream work, which in turn may be used to inform further research.

Research Question

Heuristic inquiry begins with the formulation of a specific and clear theme or question that precisely states what it is that the researcher wants to know, and that engages the researcher's passionate interest and commitment (Moustakas, 1990). The central research question in this study is:

- What are participants' experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work?

Subquestions are:

- What are participants' experiences of working with their own dreams?

- What are participants' experiences of the process and outcomes of working with group members' dreams?
- What are participants' experiences of the group leader or the facilitator (if there is one)?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following definitions will apply for the key and relevant constructs.

Dream: A series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep. A dream may also include physical sensations and sounds, and could include any combination of the separate elements. It could consist of, or only be remembered as, a single image, thought, emotion, or physical sensation rather than a series.

Dream Group: A group of people (usually six to eight in number, but can be more or less) who meet expressly for the purpose of discussing and finding meaning in their dreams. A dream group may be led by a professional therapist, an academic professional, a lay facilitator, or by a group member. A dream group may also operate on its own without a facilitator.

Dream Work: A process of exploring and interacting with the images, thoughts, emotions, sounds, and/or physical sensations from one's dreams. Dream work in this study also includes "the sense of conscious engagement with dream contents before, during, or after dreaming" (Deslauriers, 2000, p. 105). In this study, this engagement with the contents of one's dreams includes collaboration with other people in order to gain insight and find meaning that can be applied to one's waking life. It should be noted that this definition is in contrast to the psychoanalytic meaning of "dream-work" intended

by Sigmund Freud, cited by Schneider (2010), as the work that transforms the latent, or unconscious and unacceptable content of the dream into the manifest or conscious content (p. 91).

Ullman Method or Ullman Experiential Dream Group Method: A structured method of working with dreams developed by Montague Ullman (1916-2008), a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist. The basic structure of the group method is thus: (1) a group member volunteers to share a dream (2) the group members ask questions to clarify the content and associations the dreamer has with the images (3) while the dreamer listens, the group members express what their feelings would be and what the images/metaphors would mean to them if the dream were their own (4) the dreamer responds with a personal meaning (or may choose not to) and may engage in a dialogue with the group (5) the dreamer always has the last word, and may bring additional comments to a following session. Of paramount importance in the Ullman method (1994; 2006) are the Safety and Discovery factors, keeping the dreamer in control of what to disclose or accept, thus allowing an atmosphere of safe exploration and discovery.

Process: A series of actions, steps, or stages followed in working collaboratively with dreams.

Outcomes: Results, products, or effects of participating in collaborative dream work.

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative Methodology

I chose qualitative methodology for this study because it allowed me to explore and discover the process and outcomes of group dream work in an in-depth manner with each participant. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) wrote that qualitative research “consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). As opposed to a quantitative research design, which often emphasizes closed-ended questions and numeric data analysis, the qualitative approach holds the most promise to discover and make visible the process and outcomes of working with the inherently invisible phenomenon of dreams.

Heuristic Inquiry

For this study, I chose a heuristic inquiry research design (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990), a design similar to phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) in which the researcher chooses the topic because of a deep personal interest and passion for the topic. My enthusiasm and passion for this topic stems from a life-long history of vivid dream experiences, and from my experiences in an Ullman method dream work group in a Master’s level counseling class in dream work and the expressive arts, as well as several institutes on dream work and the expressive arts.

Heuristic inquiry is similar to phenomenology in that its focus is to fully and vividly recreate the lived experiences of participants of a phenomenon from their own frames of reference. It differs in that the researcher, instead of attempting to detach emotionally from the data, retains a personal connectedness throughout the process. The other major difference is in the final presentation of the data, wherein the researcher

presents each participant's unique voice, even as she combines the data into the final creative synthesis.

I first used purposeful sampling to recruit participants through contacts I had made in my preliminary immersion in the topic, and then continued with snowball sampling methods for a total of seven participants. As each participant came from a different dream group, sampling could also be considered heterogeneous. I collected data in the form of individual interviews (in-person or through Skype video-call), written journal entries of significant group dream work experiences, creative response artworks, and written artist statements. Verbatim transcripts were sent to participants for member checking. Following the heuristic methodology (Moustakas, 1990), I immersed myself in the combined data from one participant at a time, wrote my reflections, and identified themes and qualities. I passed each set of data on to my research team members, who also identified themes and qualities and wrote their reflections. I presented the data first in individual portraits, then in overall themes and qualities, and finally in the creative synthesis unique to heuristic inquiry.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the key elements for this qualitative study of the experiences of individuals of the process and outcomes of participating in group dream work. Dreams are a universal experience, and since the beginning of recorded history, people have turned to their dreams and to dream helpers or interpreters for insight, guidance, and healing. A review of the literature indicated that in our current times, many clients bring dreams into counseling sessions, and that there is a growing interest in methods of working with dreams that do not require intensive training or years of

therapy. A substantial body of empirical research on the Hill cognitive-experiential integrative dream work model (Hill, 1996, 2004) indicated efficacy and beneficial outcomes of dream work for individuals and for the counseling process.

The Ullman experiential dream group method (Ullman 1994, 2006) has evolved from its original purpose of training therapists to form the foundation of dedicated dream work groups led by therapists, lay facilitators, or by group members themselves. The structure of the Ullman method (Ullman, 1994, 2006) offers group members opportunities to find meaning in their own dreams as well as to assist group members to find meaning in their dreams. This heuristically designed phenomenological study answers the central research question, “What are participants’ experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work?” The results describe the overall essence of participants’ experiences while retaining the unique voice and essence of each individual participant. True to heuristic inquiry, the results also include the voice of the researcher in the final creative synthesis of the data.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The practice of utilizing dreams for the purposes of healing and insight has its historical beginnings in ancient civilizations. In this chapter, I will begin with an overview of the use of dream work for healing and insight from ancient times until the present. I will then review the current research on the clinical use and effectiveness of working with dreams, including client and therapist perspectives. Following will be a review of literature describing how dream work models have been developed for or incorporated into established theoretical orientations to psychotherapy. Thus, I hope to establish the importance of the topic of dream work for the counseling profession.

As my study involves the experiences of individuals in dream work groups, the concluding body of this review will be of the empirical, theoretical, conceptual, and case study literature, which describes the processes and outcomes of dream, work in groups in a variety of settings with a number of different populations. These groups include therapy or personal growth groups that integrate or incorporate dream work, and groups that are formed exclusively for the purpose of investigating dreams. Of the latter type, the focus is on the Ullman experiential dream group as a foundational model. This review concludes with a discussion of directions for future research as well as limitations and delimitations for my study.

Historical Overview of the Use of Dream Work for Healing and Insight

Van De Castle (1994) described in detail the history of dreams in several ancient cultures. He wrote that in Mesopotamia, rulers who desired a message from a god would

spend the night in a special temple, where they would make ritual preparations and offer special prayers for a favorable dream. The Old Testament had many prominent references to the Hebrew beliefs that their God gave them gifts of wisdom and guidance in dreams, many times sending angels as dream messengers. The ancient Egyptians dedicated several temples, complete with resident dream interpreters, to their god of dreams, Serapis. Egyptians slept overnight in the temples – fasting, praying, and performing magic rituals in order to incubate a dream. Dream incubation to receive messages of guidance from a temple god, and an ensuing interpretation was also a practice in ancient China.

The ancient Greeks made extensive use of dreams for healing purposes. The most elaborate practice of dream incubation rituals for healing dreams took place at temple complexes (the most famous one was established in the 5th century B.C. at Epidauros) dedicated to the god of healing, Aesculapius. Aesculapius, or one of his daughters, Hygeia or Panacea, would appear in a dream and offer specific advice for physical healing or life action. In later years, dream interpreters took more of a role in suggesting healing actions. The physician Hippocrates (469-399 B.C.) used his patients' dreams as an aid to making diagnoses of physical problems (e.g., a man's dream of barren trees could indicate not enough seminal fluid). In addition, he believed that dreams revealed wishes of the soul and had psychological significance (Van De Castle, 1994). Another Greek physician, Galen (2nd century A.D.) also used dream information to make diagnoses and even performed life-saving surgeries on the basis of dream guidance. In the same time period, Artemidorus wrote the extensive and thorough five-volume book, *Oneirocritica* (translated by Robert White, 1975), in which he offered specific

information on interpreting dream symbolism and metaphors, while keeping in mind the individuality of the dreamer.

Van De Castle (1994) wrote that while using dreams for healing and guidance continued to be an important part of many cultures, western Christian leaders brought a halt to the widespread use of dreams in Western European cultures, warning that devils and demons preyed upon people in their dreams. In the 18th century, several writers of the Romantic School published books on dream theory. However, it was not until Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* in the early 20th century that the use of dreams for psychological healing became a relevant topic for psychotherapy.

Western European Roots of Dream Work Theory

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of working with dreams involved having the dreamer use free association of thoughts and feelings as she or he talked about the dream. In this way, the person's unconscious would deliver the latent (true) meaning of the dream as opposed to the actual, or manifest, content of the dream. The therapist or analyst then interpreted the dream according to his or her understanding of the patient's inner dynamics. This was what he considered to be the dream work. Freud believed that dreams served two functions: to protect sleep, and to allow unconscious sexual conflicts to be expressed using everyday symbols disguised as sexual references (Freud, 1953; Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994).

Carl Jung, initially a follower of Freud, developed his own dream theory and way of working with dreams. In his theory, dreams directly (not latently) expressed the dreamer's inner psychic state that was not available to waking consciousness. Jung (as cited in Pesant & Zandra, 2004) believed that therapists could interpret dreams

objectively (related to the dreamer's external reality in waking life), but he emphasized subjective interpretation (related to the dreamer's personality or internal qualities). He introduced the technique of amplification to expand the meaning of dream symbols and their connection to the dreamer. In his theory, dream images sometimes related directly to the dreamer's waking life and at other times represented archetypes (universal concepts and qualities such as the wise old man or woman) from the collective unconscious (Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994). He introduced the use of active imagination-putting oneself in a meditative state, focusing on the dream images, observing them with the imagination for changes or continuation of the dream, and potentially having a spoken or written dialogue with the imagery as it unfolded (Johnson, 1986; Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994).

Jung also encouraged persons to write their dreams, and to depict them in drawing, painting, or sculpture. Hall, a Jungian dream theory writer (as cited in Van De Castle, 1994), called this practice of giving life to dream images 'dream enactment,' and also suggested wearing jewelry or clothing inspired by dream images in order to keep receiving the positive inspiration and evolving message of the dream. Jungian methods, although now always acknowledged as such, have continued to be a part of many contemporary dream work models (Van De Castle, 1994).

Other influential 20th century dream theorists that came from psychoanalytic roots included Alfred Adler and Fritz Perls. Adler believed that dreams were a continuity of waking life events and issues related to personal life style concerns and social interest. As such, they could be used to help individuals take actions to solve their lifestyle problems. Accordingly, he believed that persons who were successful in resolving their

problems had fewer dreams (Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994). Fritz Perls, in his Gestalt theory of dream work, believed that every part of a dream was a part of the dreamer that the dreamer had disowned and projected onto the symbols and situations in the dream. The dream work and integration (done in a group setting) could consist of the dreamer telling the dream in first person, describing himself or herself as each part of image in the dream, becoming that image by acting it out, and using the empty chair technique to allow different parts to interact with each other (Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994).

Dream Work Models in the Later 20th Century and Early 21st Century

Eugene Gendlin and Gayle Delaney contributed dream work models based on specific questions to which the dreamer responded in words, feelings, and in ideas for actions or next steps. Gendlin (1986) adapted his therapy-based technique of *focusing* into a structured way to work with dreams. He developed a series of 16 questions for the dreamer to consider while monitoring (focusing on) his or her body for a physical “felt shift: or “ah-ha” response. Following this first response, the dreamer focused on feeling another physical response indicating a “growth direction,” and a subsequent action to take. Delaney (1993) created a set of structured interview questions that she named The Dream Interview Method (DIM). In this two-phase model, the therapist (or interviewer) communicated the position of coming from another planet so as to have no preconceived ideas of what the dream symbols or metaphors might mean. After the client described the personal meanings of the dream elements, the interviewer asked questions that encouraged the dreamer to bridge the content to present waking life concerns and to develop options for positive change.

Montague Ullman, a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist, developed a model of group dream work that he used to teach the procedures of dream work to young psychiatric interns in Switzerland beginning in 1974 (Ullman, 1994). Most psychotherapists at the time were trained only in the theoretical aspects of dream work. They may have experienced working with their own dreams in individual therapy sessions, yet had no practical training or experience which they could use with clients. Ullman's method involved a teaching rather than a therapeutic setting, so that students could share their dreams and learn techniques experientially in a psychologically safe environment. As the teacher and leader responsible for facilitating the experience, he was also a participant in the group, at times sharing his own dreams.

He found that this procedure not only helped the interns in working with their own dreams, but also gave them the skills and confidence to work with dreams in a clinical setting with patients. He called the method "The Experiential Dream Group," and applied it to the training of therapists (Ullman, 1994). He described the step-by-step process in which one member of the group shared a dream, and the other group members assisted the dreamer in finding meaning in the dream. He specifically emphasized the psychological safety of the dreamer and the dreamer's status as the ultimate expert in interpreting the meaning of the dream.

From these beginnings, Ullman's mission became to make group dream work available to lay people with or without an attending therapist. For over two decades, he offered training sessions in the United States and Sweden to those who wished to become dream group leaders. The Ullman experiential dream group method has been used in many different settings and the basic steps and assumption have served as the foundation

of many dream work groups in community, clinical, and educational settings (Feinberg, 1981; Kautner, 2005; Krippner, Gabel, Green, & Rubien, 1994; Provost, 1999; Stimson, 2009; Taylor, 1983, 2009; Wolk, 1996).

Beginning in 1994, Clara E. Hill developed, and with her associates, has researched extensively, an integrated cognitive-experiential model of dream work (Hill, 1996, 2004). She structured the model with three basic stages: exploration, based on client-centered theory; insight, based on psychodynamic theory; and action, based on behavioral theory (Hill, 2003). She explained that in the exploration stage, the therapist assists the client to describe, re-experience, make associations with, and identify waking life triggers of the dream (DRAW). During the insight stage, the therapist assists the client to find meaning related to the dream content itself, its connection to waking life, or its association with the personality dynamics of the dreamer. In the final stage, the therapist works with the client to channel the new knowledge into an action step in waking life (Hill, 2003).

Clinical Use and Effectiveness of Working with Dreams in Therapy

The most extensive empirical research on working with dreams in therapy has been conducted on the Hill cognitive-experiential model by Hill and her associates (Pesant & Zandra, 2004). Hill (2003) wrote that 17 studies had been conducted up until that time (2002) with three more in progress. She gave a general overview of the results of this research saying that they indicated that dream work is effective with clients, that it is suitable for a wide variety of people, that its success depends on client and therapist factors, and that it can be valuable as a stand-alone therapeutic tool even in a single session.

Eudell-Simmons and Hilsenroth (2005) completed a review of the empirical research regarding the use of dreams in psychotherapy. The results of their review supported four helpful and relevant uses for dreams in clinical practice. They described these as facilitating the therapeutic process, facilitating patient insight and self-awareness, providing relevant and valuable information to the clinician about the client, and providing a measurement of growth or change in therapy. In a much earlier experimental study conducted in a sleep lab, Cartwright, Tipton, and Wicklund (1980) found that participants who were awakened from REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, in which dreams occur (Doweiko, 2002), and asked to report their dreams and then discuss them in the morning, stayed in therapy longer and used the time more productively than a control group going directly into therapy, or a group who were awakened during non-REM sleep.

Pesant and Zandra (2004) reviewed the dream work literature in three areas- empirical, theoretical, and clinical. They conducted a comprehensive review of empirical studies, and found that the most extensive empirical research had been conducted on the Hill model (Hill, 1996, 2004). Even though they acknowledged some methodological limitations of the research, which included small sample sizes and participants that were usually student volunteers rather than a more varied or clinical population, they emphasized that this research by Hill and her colleagues was a valuable contribution and verified that the results as a whole indicated that dream work is effective with different types of people.

From their review of the case reports and descriptive studies, Pesant and Zandra (2004) reported indications of three types of gains from working with dreams: client insights, increased client involvement in therapy, and better understanding of client

dynamics and progress. The authors highlighted two overall major findings from their review-that exploring dreams can help clients gain insight and better self-understanding, and that working collaboratively on dreams increases clients' engagement in therapy. They concluded their review with suggested guidelines to therapists for integrating dream work into clinical practice.

Client Outcomes and Process in the Hill Model of Dream Work

Research on the Hill (1996, 2004) model has yielded positive results for the effectiveness of dream work with individuals and with selected groups. Following is a review of relevant studies with individual dream work. I will review the studies on selected groups in the group section.

Hill, Diemer, Hess, Hillyer, and Seeman (1993) set out to discover whether more positive results in session quality, insight, and emotions were gained from interpreting one's own dream (i.e., the meaningfulness of the dream), from interpreting someone else's dream that the therapist read (i.e., projection onto the dream), or from interpreting a life event as a waking dream (i.e., the interpretation process). The results indicated that in terms of session depth and quality of insight, that interpreting one's own dream was more beneficial than interpreting someone else's dream or a waking event. Notable, the ratings for session depth and quality of insight were higher than the norms for clients in ongoing therapy. It is also notable here that the projection or interpretation of someone else's dream took place in the absence of the actual dreamer, and only in the presence of the therapist; ostensibly this may have affected the investment and interest in the dream interpretation.

Hill, Diemer, and Heaton (1997) conducted a mixed methods study of 65 mostly female undergraduate students who volunteered for a dream interpretation session. The participants rated gaining insight, discovering links to waking life, and getting another person's feedback as the most helpful components; the majority did not rate or list anything that was least helpful. The results also indicated that the participant clients gained a valuable understanding of how their dreams fit into their waking lives, thus it had served as a mini-therapy session.

Heaton, Hill, Peterson, Rochlen, and Zack (1998) used the *Gains From Dream Interpretation (GDI)* rating scale, which they developed from responses to a previous study (Hill, Diemer, & Heaton, 1997), to measure whether 25 volunteer undergraduate students gained more from a self-guided dream work session or from a therapist-facilitated session. Volunteer clients gave higher ratings and reported more gains from working with a therapist. Although 88% of the volunteer clients preferred to work with a therapist, there was also evidence of benefit and usefulness from the self-guided sessions.

Hill, Knox, Hess, Crook-Lyon, Goates-Jones, and Sim (2004) conducted a case study on a single session of dream work to assess gains of insight. They defined insight as meaning any variation of an "ah-hah" experience, in which the client expressed a new perception of self or the world. They found in this case that the dreamer received insight gradually, beginning with a general understanding of the dream before the session, then working with the therapist on exploration and insight during the session, and continuing to work on the dream on her own. The authors suggested that based on these results, therapists would do better to encourage the clients' insight rather than interpret the dream for them.

Knox, Hill, Hess, and Crook-Lyon (2008) extended and replicated the study by analyzing two additional case studies, one in which the client attained insight, and another in which the client did not gain insight. Comparing and contrasting the results, they found that the clients who did gain insight had positive attitudes towards dreams, were motivated, trusting, and emotionally present in the session. The client who did not gain insight had doubts about the value of dreams, was untrusting and emotionally overwhelmed during the session.

Crook-Lyon and Hill (2004) conducted a quantitative study of 95 clients' reactions to working with dreams while in ongoing psychotherapy. They reported that 68% of clients discussed dreams in therapy. Their results suggested three major findings- that clients reacted favorably when their therapists encouraged them to work with their dreams, that clients found the dream work sessions to be helpful, and that overall, clients found any of the dream activities (e.g., describing/exploring the dream or working on action plans) to be helpful. Reasons suggested for not working on dreams were low dream recall, low interest, time constraints, or the therapist's lack of encouragement.

Responding to Pesant and Zandra's (2004) conclusion that more specific measures were needed to indicate client outcomes in dream work, Hill et al. (2006) conducted a study on client characteristics that contributed to the processes and outcomes of working with dreams in the Hill model (1996, 2004). Forty-two therapists trained in the Hill model conducted single sessions of dream work with 157 volunteer clients not currently in therapy. Results indicated that the clients who had the highest degree of problems with no ideas for solving them made the most changes in positive action from the dream sessions. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the authors also found that clients

received more insight into their dreams from the exploration stage than the actual insight stage. The authors concluded that spending more time in the exploration stage (e.g., description, re-experiencing, associations, waking life triggers) would be more beneficial to clients than going quickly to the insight stage or than interpreting the dream for the client.

Therapist Perspectives in Dream Work

Crook and Hill (2003) conducted a survey of 129 private practice therapists who were mostly male, Caucasian, and who preferred cognitive-behavioral methods. The results of their survey indicated that although it may be a small percentage of their time (media of 5%), 92% of the therapists worked with dreams at some time, and an estimated 15% of their clients brought dreams to therapy in the past year. They were more likely to use exploration type activities and to help clients connect dream images to waking life than they were to interpret dreams or suggest action activities. Generally, they reported they were more likely to work with clients who had troubling dreams, had PTSD, or who were interested in personal growth. They were not likely to use dream work with clients who had a distorted sense of reality (e.g., clients with schizophrenia or psychoses).

In a previous study not directly related to the Hill model (1996, 2004), Schredl, Bohusch, Kahl, Mader, and Somesan (2000) conducted a survey in Germany of 79 private practice psychotherapists of various theoretical orientations about their work with dreams in outpatient therapy. The authors found that therapists estimated that about 70% of their patients benefited from dream work. Therapists reported that they worked on dreams with clients in 28% of sessions, that 64% of clients initiated the dream work, and that 49% of clients brought in at least one dream. Their results suggested a positive

correlation between the frequency of the therapists' personal use of dream work and the frequency of dream work with clients.

Dream Work within Existing Theories of Psychotherapy

There is an additional body of literature, mostly theoretical and descriptive, about incorporating dream work into existing theoretical orientations and ways of working in psychotherapy, including person-centered, Developmental Counseling and Therapy (DCT), and cognitive-experiential. While some of these models of dream work fit within the framework of a specific theory, others are more integrative in nature.

Using qualitative reflexive action research methods, Boyd (2005) conducted a study of individual clients' experiences of dream work specifically within the context of time-limited therapy. She used session process notes, a semi-structured questionnaire and personally interviewed 11 women and three men, ages 19-63, who were in therapy for anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, low self-esteem, bereavement, eating disorders, and feelings of hopelessness and marginalization. To analyze the data, she used the Moustakas (1990) heuristic approach, which keeps the uniqueness of the individual responses within the big picture results of the group. She reported the main themes to be that dreams are a way of getting in, revealing and focusing on the issue, and that working with dreams is part of the self-actualizing process. The participant responses indicated that dream work was a catalyst for clients to be honest with themselves, to be open to change, and to gain new perspectives. She reported that the clients saw the therapist's contributions not as set interpretations, but as possibilities to consider, and that clients saw the dream work as only a part of the counseling process.

She concluded that the findings supported, from the clients' perspective, the usefulness of using dreams in time-limited therapy.

Barrineau (1996), and Koch (2009), explained the rationale for using dream work in person-centered therapy and gave examples of how it could be integrated. Barrineau (1996) wrote that clarifying and exploring the subconscious ideas brought forth by dreams with empathy and genuineness was a means of assisting the client with personal growth and self-actualization. Koch (2009) wrote that Carl Rogers had specifically called for dreaming to be part of the person-centered structure, and that at its core, dreaming was a self-actualizing process. She suggested that person-centered therapists inquire at the beginning of each session about the client's day and night experiences, thus being truly nonjudgmental and not valuing waking experience over dream or sleeping experience.

Doweiko (2002) and Montangero (2009) related the similarities of working with dreams and waking cognitive processes within cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). Doweiko (2002) reported that because of the neurobiological research on the sleep state, the psychological dream theories of Freud (Freud, 1953) have been rendered non-viable. He stated that working with dreams in cognitive-behavioral therapy could be a valuable tool, however - first by explaining the brain-based causes of dreaming to the client, and then by working with the waking life reported narrative of the dream as another example of the client's cognitive distortions. Montangero (2009) wrote that dreaming involved multiple cognitive processes. He proposed, described, and gave an example of a dream interpretation method (DMR-Description, Memory Sources, and Reformulation) compatible with cognitive concepts. He stated that although no experimental research

has been conducted on working with dreams in CBT, Aaron Beck developed the principles of cognitive therapy from experimental studies about the dream content of patients with depression. He stated that Beck advocated for the use of dreams in therapy to provide clarification of a problem and to reflect changes in waking life.

Barrett (2002) wrote that while even modern psychodynamically oriented therapists do not follow Freud's dream theories, they and other modern therapists, including cognitive-behavioralists, use dreams to assist in treatment. She described the use of dream work in short-term symptom-focused psychotherapy in a variety of areas. She wrote that dreams in bereavement therapy can show the stages of grief and bring comfort; dreams can be used to explore the impact of war-related PTSD; dreams in cross-cultural therapy can bring new and healing perspectives; and dreams of divorced people can mark improvement in depression.

Marszalek and Myers (2006) wrote that they had integrated dream work into counseling with diverse clients and found it promoted client development, understanding, and self-efficacy. They described the use of Ivey's Developmental Counseling and Therapy (DCT), a cognitive-affective-behavioral counseling model based on Piagetian theory, as a framework for working with dreams. They explained in detail an eight-step model, with the caveat that therapists were not limited to the DCT model, and were free to integrate other theories of dream work.

After reviewing several theoretical approaches to dream work, Eudell-Simmons and Hilsenroth (2007) proposed an integrative model that provided comprehensive guidelines for working with dreams in psychotherapy. On a chart, they compared and contrasted eight approaches (classical psychoanalysis, contemporary psychodynamic-

interpersonal, existential/gestalt, cognitive-experiential, cognitive-behavioral, physiological, linguistic, and their own integration model) in terms of function of dreams, goal of dream work, and techniques. Most notable in the integrated model was that all or any of the techniques from the other models were appropriated for use according to the therapist's comfort and choice of treatment goals informed by client characteristics and needs.

Working with Dreams in Groups

In this section of the review, I will turn to the review of the empirical, theoretical, conceptual, and descriptive methodological case study literature on group dream work. Although the empirical studies (Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Coholic & Breton, 2007; Falk & Hill, 1995; Kautner, 2005; Kolchakian & Hill, 2002; Meyer, 1980; Sarlin, 1991; Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1995) and descriptive case studies (Berube, 1999; Lamb & Hollis, 1994; Provost, 1999; Quackenbush, 1990; Shuttleworth-Jordan, Saayman, & Faber, 1988; Toombs & Toombs, 1985; Wright, Ley, & French, 1994) were conducted on and described groups specifically dedicated to dream work, many therapists have historically incorporated work with dreams into regular psychotherapy groups according to their group theoretical models and more recently into personal growth groups (Derr & Zimpfer, 1996).

Dream work groups have also been conducted in educational settings in classes and in trainings for student and practicing therapists (Dushman & Sutherland, 1997; Freeman & Vogel, 2005; Shuttleworth-Jordan et al., 1988; Stimson, 2009; Ullman, 1994). In addition, dream work has been used in special population groups such as addiction recovery (Flowers & Zweben, 1996, 1998), divorced women (Falk & Hill,

1995), chronically mentally ill outpatients (Feinberg, 1981), and a variety of community and lay groups (Krippner et al., 1994; Taylor, 1983, 2009).

Differences from Group Therapy

Although a therapist may lead dream groups and the groups may lead to personal growth and healing, there are marked theoretical differences between the two types of groups (Shuttleworth-Jordan et al., 1988; Toombs & Toombs, 1985; Ullman, 1990). Berube (1999) cautions that a dream group is not therapy, and may not be appropriated for those with difficult issues or weak boundaries, and that group members should be basically psychologically healthy. Shuttleworth-Jordan et al. (1988) stated that as dream work could lead rapidly to uncovering of unconscious material, dream groups would not be recommended for persons with psychotic conditions or tendencies. Provost (1999) recommended screening dream group participants and being alert for signs of psychopathology that would indicate a need for formal therapy. The roles of the dreamer, group leader, and group members are clearly defined in a dream work group. Most of the interpersonal interaction in a dream work group focuses on the dream content and is geared towards problem-solving, not on intrapersonal processes or the interpersonal interactions among group members (Shuttleworth-Jordan et al., 1988; Toombs & Toombs, 1985).

Toombs and Toombs (1985) stated that as opposed to the confrontation common in group therapy, the sense of safety and security fostered by the dream work group structure invited self-disclosure and quick involvement by group members. Feinberg (1981) described the dream group as “easier, less volatile, and more enjoyable” and at the same time affirming to self-disclosure (p. 509). Provost (1999) wrote that in terms of

group development, the shared goals of processing dreams tended to facilitate quick movement into self-exploration, interpersonal sharing, and group cohesiveness, and that termination was not a difficult or drawn-out process. Similarly, Shuttleworth-Jordan et al. (1988) reported that because of the dream work group's non-emphasis on interpersonal relationships, and the quick self-disclosure of dream work, that it was not as affected by membership changes or time continuity.

Ullman (1990) outlined the differences in what he called "Basic Dream Work" in his experiential dream work group and the way a therapist would work with a client's dream in individual or group therapy. He wrote that in essence it was the power differential that separated the two situations. He explained that in formal therapy, the therapist controlled the dream interpretation process, and was free to use the dream in any way to further the therapy. In the experiential dream group, the leader (if there were one) served not as a therapist, but to insure the group followed the process. In addition, the leader had the option of sharing a dream as a group member. He emphasized that the dreamer was in charge of what she or he shared with or accepted from the group, thus assuring the dreamer's psychological safety and ownership of the dream.

Dream Work within Therapy Groups

Clark (1994) reviewed literature that indicated that working with dreams in group therapy is both controversial and ambiguous; he commented that dream work is rarely mentioned in textbooks for group therapy. He reported advantages (self-understanding, group cohesion, and group stimulation) and challenges (counselor training/competency, time consumed, dream interpretation, attitudes towards dreams) of working with dreams in group therapy. He wrote that group members benefited from looking at the different

and unfamiliar perspectives of dreams, were more open to discussing bizarre content of dreams than they were discussing waking life events, and often gained personal insight, rapport, and connection from processing other group members' dreams. He stated that group members improved their relationships when working through dreams about each other, and that introducing a dream was a good strategy when a member or the group as a whole was "stuck."

Derr and Zimpfer (1996) reviewed the application of several different theoretical and atheoretical dream work models (i.e., Ullman, Shuttleworth-Jordan, Interpersonal, Locke, Gestalt, and Psychodrama) to group therapy and the impact they had on group process and interaction. They reported three common factors in all the approaches: (1) statement of dream content, (2) examination of dream content, and (3) interpretation of the dream. They cited Yalom's (1985) therapeutic factors of universality, cohesiveness, and interpersonal learning as especially significant, and commented that dreams were an indirect way to discuss emotional and sensitive areas with less inhibition. Related to group process, they stated that the process goals of the dream work would guide whether the emphasis would be for the individual, for the interpersonal relationships of the group members, or for the group as a whole culture.

Friedman (2000) wrote that even though dreams are inherently intrapersonal, they become interpersonal when shared with a group, and that the group members can fill the role of containing the dreamer's emotions, much as a parent does when a child relates a frightening dream. As group members share their association as if the dream were their own without interpretation (Ullman, 1994), the dreamer can integrate the projections and the group's interaction is enhanced.

Wright, Ley, and French (1994) described a dream work group that met for six weeks, after which the authors analyzed the group processes according to Yalom's (1985) therapeutic factors. They gave specific examples from the actual group processes to illustrate each factor. The participants in the group reported the following benefits: finding solutions to major life issues, gaining confidence and power from psychic energy, and growing toward mental and emotional health. They also reported benefiting from the skills and knowledge they gained that allowed them to work on dreams beyond the group (drama, journaling, poetry, painting, bodywork). The authors stated that they experienced compassion and eagerness in the group.

Lamb and Hollis (1994), psychotherapists, shared results from the use of their ROIS model of group dream work in therapy. They described the four stages: (1) re-experiencing the dream through guided relaxation, (2) observing thoughts and feelings about the dream, (3) interacting with the dream, and (4) sharing the dream with the group and answering open-ended questions. The group members were from the therapists' private practices or referred from other therapists, and did not include clients with psychoses. The dream group was a primary source of treatment for most of the members, while a few participated as an adjunct to individual therapy. The authors reported that results for clients (including some clients with a history of anxiety, depression, and obsessive thoughts) included an increase in self-respect and patience with their own involvement and personal development. Some clients reported a new conception of the nature of reality; others found valuable guidance coming from within themselves through their dreams; and others seemed to feel less alone.

Utilizing Adlerian theory, Dushman and Sutherland (1997) developed a workshop to explore dreams that incorporated the creative arts and psychodrama. Group members created artworks to represent their own dreams, as responses to other group members' acting out of their dreams, and as new visions for the dreamer suggested by the psychodramatic dream work enactment. The authors suggested that these could be given to the dreamer as gifts to take home for further contemplation. They also suggested that going along with the Adlerian concept of community, the members could create a group artwork expressing their collective experience. They concluded that the artmaking and psychodrama were expressive processes that supported the concepts of Adlerian dream interpretation (the dream is a bridge that connects the dreamer to a waking goal), and Adlerian group therapy: to enhance the feeling of belonging, and to encourage cooperation and social interest.

Personal Growth Groups with a Dream Work Focus

Provost (1999) facilitated 10 short-term (six weeks) personal growth groups with a focus on dream work for counseling students and adults from the community. Goals for the students included gaining deeper self-understanding that would transfer to developing counseling skills. Provost described the small group as an ideal setting to work with dreams because members experienced therapeutic group factors identified by Yalom (Yalom, 1985) such as universality (shared similar dreams), modeling (learned new skills by observing others process dreams), and interpersonal learning (responded to and helped process each others' dreams). She described in detail the use of the Ullman method (Ullman, 1979, 1994, 2006) including the role of the group leader. She recommended the Ullman method as the best approach for immediately involving all of the group members.

Although she introduced Gestalt, Jungian, and Humanistic dream work techniques in later sessions, she emphasized that the Ullman method (Ullman, 1994, 2006; Ullman & Limmer, 1988) "...is the most effective in engaging everyone and should continue to be used intermittently with...other methods" (p.83).

Berube (1999) described in detail practical methods to explore dreams in a structured group for the purpose of personal growth and development, delineating the specific roles of the dreamer, the group members, and the facilitator. He wrote that there were two myths that prevented people from enjoying the benefits of dream work by citing Ullman's premises that it is not only specially trained professionals that can properly work with dreams, and that non-professionals can engage in dream work with beneficial results.

Using Ullman's process for a dream appreciation group (Ullman, 1989, 1994, 2006) Sarlin (1991) conducted a two-year pilot study on its potential for stress alleviation and prevention with medical students. Other purposes for the group included the development of greater empathy for others, and increased self-awareness. The author presented selected vignettes that he used to document the process. Results of the two-year dream group experience suggested that the medical students benefited from lower ongoing stress as they developed a cohesive, supportive group in which they shared common concerns through their dream work. Also, the process seemed to facilitate the students' personal and professional identity development and relationships.

Quackenbush (1990) described a personal growth counseling group with a dream focus offered at a university counseling center to entice those students who might not join a traditional counseling group or who would not make use of the counseling services. By

the end of the school year, the group had evolved into a member-guided forum for “sharing, reflecting, exploring, assimilating, and growing” with the catch phrase of “the dreamer knows the answer” (p. 563). Indications of success and positive results included a 95% attendance rate and requests from group members to continue the group the next academic year.

Toombs and Toombs (1985) reported their experiences in developing dream group procedures to promote personal growth in fifteen self-help groups. Five of the groups consisted of university students and the remaining ten groups came from selected community audiences. The facilitators employed the basic steps of the Ullman method (Ullman, 1994, 2006), and incorporated techniques such as active imagination (Johnson, 1986), applying key questions, and art forms such as Haiku (poetry), drawing, and painting to explore the dreams. They stated that the group members experienced wonder, reverence, and respect for the personal and social truths revealed to them by the dream. They wrote that the sharing of dream constructed complex personal interactions among the group members, which in turn promoted deep empathy, respect, and trust.

Dream Work Groups in Educational Settings

For six years, Freeman and Vogel (2005) developed and implemented a creative experiential dream interpretation class for counseling and psychology students. They saw the course as offering counselor educators a way to help their students develop basic interviewing skills and advanced processing techniques while at the same time facilitating the students’ self-exploration and improving their relational skills. Most of the course was based on the dream interviewing techniques of Delaney (1993); however Gestalt, Ullman, focusing, active imagination, and psychodrama techniques were also

taught and experienced. In final narratives, students shared experiences of personal change, cohesion, self-understanding, and altruism. They expressed renewed interest in their counseling and psychology careers, and they found the course helpful in solving relationship challenges and in choosing career paths.

Over the course of a semester, Freeman and Vogel (2005) conducted a quantitative measure of the growth of 21 students ages 22-55, who completed the OQ-45.2 (a global measure of counseling outcomes) before and after the course. The OQ-45.2 gave an overall score as well as a mean decrease in each of the three subscales. Thus, even with a limited sample size, the results supported an increase in psychological functioning (Freeman & Vogel, 2005).

Stimson (2009) developed a university course based on the Ullman experiential dream group method (Ullman, 1994, 2006; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1989) at Taiwan's National Medical College, and then went on to further develop it for the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the National University in Taiwan. Stimson proposed that by participating in an Ullman experiential dream group, social work practitioners could uncover and develop skills of reflective practice that included spontaneity and intuition, which in turn would lead to positive and successful results in working with clients. He quoted Ullman's (Ullman, 2006) term of 'incorruptible core of being' to describe the source of creative breakthroughs, spiritual intuitions, and scientific insights. He stated that dreams came from that core source, speaking the language of creative metaphorical imagery, and which when explored, promoted the development of intuitive sensitivity, which in turn created reflective skills in practitioners. He gave a detailed case example of a graduate student working through a dream using the stages of the Ullman

method. He concluded that the experiential dream group is a powerful method in the professional curriculum and workplace to train students and professionals in reflective practice.

Ullman (1994) describes how he developed and used the experiential dream group method in 1974 as a way to train psychiatric interns in Switzerland to work with dreams in therapy (described previously in this review). Shuttleworth-Jordan et al. (1988) developed a Jungian based group dream work model similar to the Ullman group model within the context of a university and professional training setting.

Outcomes of Group Dream Work

Empirical Research on Group Dream Work

Cohen and Bumbaugh (2004) conducted a phenomenological qualitative study that explored group dream work with six oncology nurses as a way to increase self-understanding and problem solving in their professional and personal lives. They interviewed each participant three times (pre-group, one month and six months post-group). The group, facilitated by a Jungian therapy trainee and a licensed counselor, met for eight weekly 90-minute sessions and included two didactic sessions and six dream work sessions. Each member worked through at least one dream, and group members assisted by discussing the meaning and purpose of the dream in the dreamer's present and ongoing personal and professional life. Activities to express the dream included journaling, active imagination, and expressive arts (sculpting, drawing, readings). During the last session, a facilitator created and read a fairy tale incorporating images from each person's dream, and each nurse contributed personal meaning words to a collective collage that portrayed the group experience as a whole.

Post-group themes on the effect of dream work on nursing practice included connections established between dream work and work, interaction with patients about after-death experiences, nightmares and fears of going to sleep, discussion with one's family members and staff about dreams, dreams about work that helped to resolve work situations, relation between dreams and work, awareness about dreams and awareness of patient feelings, and having more open discussion about feelings and about death. Post-group themes on the healing factors of group dream work included new learning, solving problems with expressive writing and the arts, understanding that 'your dream is your dream' and no one else's, insight, introspection, and awareness about self, creativity and self-direction, the value of dream work that wasn't apparent at the time of the work, a sense of discovery and continued learning, and 'dream work gets to the core faster than traditional [approaches]' (p. 820).

Falk and Hill (1995) conducted an experimental quantitative study of group dream work for women who were separated or in the process of divorce. They compared 22 women in four eight-week dream groups with 12 women on a waiting list for a group. They utilized the Hill model, at that time in preparation. One person shared a dream and the group members assisted in exploring the dream, interpreting the dream, and suggesting actions based on the learning from the dream. During the exploration and interpretation stages, the group members related what their associations or meanings would have been if the dream had been their own. This projection step is part of the Ullman method (Ullman, 1994, 2006; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1989). The results for the women who participated in the dream groups suggested positive gains of increased

insight into their dreams, of ability to take positive actions from their awareness, and of increased self-esteem.

Falk and Hill (1995) stated that these results indicated that dream work groups had the potential for an intervention strategy for women in separation or divorce, as there is often an accompanying loss of self-worth and self-esteem. They commented that working with dreams led to accessing otherwise difficult to reach deeper feelings and thoughts, and that once participants engaged in the dream work process they experienced less resistance than is common in regular therapy. They listed as a limitation that although the women had opportunities to respond to others' dreams as if they were their own, having opportunities to work on more of their own dreams would have been beneficial.

Setting up a variation of group dream work, Kolchakian and Hill (2002) studied the effectiveness of the Hill model of dream interpretation with 40 heterosexual couples that had been in a dating relationship for at least three months. Using an experimental design, the researchers measured each partner's insight into his or her own dream, his or her partner's dream, and into their dating relationship. They compared females to females and males to males. They asked each partner to write an interpretation of his or her own dream and of his or her partner's dream. They then asked them what they thought the dream meant for themselves, for their partners, and for their relationship, and how the interpretation might help to explain recent waking events in their lives, separately and in relationship. They found that although the women gained more from the dream interpretation than the men, both men and women benefited from interpreting the other's dream 'as if it were their own.' Interestingly, this finding contrasted with a

previous study reviewed above (Hill, 1993), in which participants did not benefit as much from the projection interpretation of another's dream. Perhaps the difference could be that the couples were personally involved with each other, as opposed to the participants in the previous study who heard the therapist read a dream that belonged to an unknown and not physically present person.

Using a qualitative grounded theory method, Coholic and Breton (2007) studied the connections between dream work and spirituality, and the development of self-awareness in two holistic arts-based groups that met for six two-hour sessions. Participants were eight women affiliated with a community agency in the area of substance abuse, and four female social work students. The groups operated under the assumptions of the Hill model (2003): (1) dreams can reflect waking life, (2) the meaning of dreams is personal, and (3) working with dreams should be a collaborative effort, as well as following the current interest on a view of dream work that neither requires years of training for the therapist nor years of therapy for the client. At the beginning session, each participant created a dream collage, and the group explored the dreams through the metaphor of the many layers of the collage images. Dream work techniques included journaling, asking the symbols for messages, and looking at the images as parts of self. In addition to the specific dream work techniques, activities included meditation, guided imagery, mindfulness exercises, drawing, and working with clay.

The researchers (Coholic & Breton, 2007) recorded and transcribed all of the group sessions and conducted individual interviews upon completion of the groups. They reported that the data analysis indicated dream work was helpful to participants in gaining new insight and self-awareness, that dream images represented current waking

life issues, and that group dream work was a positive, relaxing, and even fun way to process serious issues. Relating to spirituality, participants related that some dreams contained messages or guidance from divine sources, premonitions, or contact with the deceased. The authors concluded that linking the highly personal nature of dreams and spirituality in a group encouraged connections among group members and strengthened the therapeutic alliance.

Shuttleworth-Jordan (1995) conducted three process research studies on the Shuttleworth-Jordan model of dream work (Shuttleworth-Jordan et al., 1988) in order to refine the effectiveness of the model. Shuttleworth-Jordan et al. (1988) described this four-step model as an alternative to, yet similar to, the Ullman method. The steps included an initial relaxation exercise, the dreamer's statement of the dream content, the amplification of imagery and identification of themes, and a final interpretation by the group leader. They wrote that the most notable difference was the absence of Ullman's second step in which group members use projection to imagine that the dream is their own and give their personal associations while the dreamer listens. They justified the removal of this step by citing psychodynamic theoretical concepts that the dreamer could possibly be traumatized by internalizing premature interpretation through the projections and that it was important to keep the focus on the dreamer's experience of the dream and imagery at all times.

In Shuttleworth-Jordan's first study, a dream work group using the Shuttleworth-Jordan model (Shuttleworth-Jordan et al., 1988) was compared with an Ullman model group and a control group. Participants included 21 undergraduate psychology students. The researcher analyzed the data, which consisted of the group members' (as dreamer

and group participant) and the group leader's completion of a ten point rating scale as well as written descriptions in order to assess changes in levels of tension at each step. According to the definitions set for the meaning of tension levels, results indicated that there was greater group involvement without the group projection step, and thus did not support the use of this step.

In the second process study on the model, Shuttleworth-Jordan (1995) used a qualitative interviewing and analysis method to study the experiences of nine psychology students in a weekly two and one-half hour dream exploration group that met for ten weeks. The responses of the participants indicated the following desired additions and revisions to the process: to decide before the opening relaxation who would be sharing a dream (thus reducing tension), to allow group members to give interpretations of the dream before the group leader gave an overall interpretation, and to add a feedback closure step at the end in which each group member contributed a comment.

Shuttleworth-Jordan (1995) conducted the third study to evaluate the model with the suggested revisions, and to compare responses to its use with or without the inclusion of a peak feelings component. Ten psychology honors students participated in a two and one-half day intensive dream group in which five shared dreams with peak feeling components, and five did not include the affective component in their dream sharing. The data included the subjective tension rating scales and two questionnaires. The results indicated that the participants found the additions and changes to the process very beneficial; they did not experience anxiety during the beginning relaxation, their interpretations opened up and expanded the meaning of the dream which the group leader

subsequently integrated into a collective interpretation, and they rated the feedback step high on universality and cohesiveness (Yalom, 1985).

In addition, the results indicated that the use of the peak feelings component in the dream work produced more intense emotional involvement, and even with the higher tension ratings, did not have negative effects such as producing overwhelming anxiety. On the contrary, the results suggested that describing and exploring the main feelings highlighted the most important emotions, helped identify hidden feelings in the dream, and gave the process an “emotionally vibrant focus,” while “charging the images with meaning” (Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1995, p. 28).

Kautner (2005) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study on the experiences of nine older people, ages 62-79, participating in eight weekly sessions of an Ullman dream group. Using Ullman’s four-step process (Ullman, 2001), one dreamer shared a dream, and the group members, or co-dreamers, assisted the dreamer to find meaning in the dream related to daily waking experiences. Kautner (2005) analyzed the data from three dreamers and three co-dreamers, and created a structure that portrayed how each participant experienced the four stages of the process. The results indicated that both groups experienced the steps in very similar ways.

Participant responses indicated that dreamers were surprised to experience a high degree of perceptiveness, sensitivity, and caring from the co-dreamers, whom they had not previously met or known. Interestingly, and contrary to the cautions given by Shuttleworth-Jordan et al. (1988), the dreamers gladly accepted the co-dreamers’ feedback (in the form of interpreting the dream as their own) as having value when they could relate it to their lives and past experiences. When the feedback did not seem

relevant, the dreamers assigned it to being relevant to the co-dreamers' lives and past experiences. Although this group was basically psychologically healthy and not a therapy group, it seems significant that the group projections did not appear to cause trauma or take away from the dreamer's experience.

Another interesting finding in this study (Kautner, 2005) was that the two male participants in the study, who originally expressed skepticism about the use of talking about their own or others' dreams, shared their dreams and responded with positive feedback about the process. One male participant shared a dream in the early part of the study and acknowledged that he would never have opened up or shared any problems to a regular group or to a psychiatrist or even to his family. He admitted that the dream group process was an excellent way to loosen him up. In contrast with the finding of a previous study cited by Kautner (Hartmann, Harrison, & Zborowski, 2001) in which older people with thinner boundaries were more likely to remember and share their dreams than those with thick boundaries (more rigid personalities), the results of Kautner's study indicated that combining people with different personalities in dream groups positively affected dream sharing and had the potential to create connections among diverse populations. She suggested that the dream group could be an encouraging and less threatening venue for self-expression for older people who were not open to talking to a psychotherapist for help with their problems. She concluded, "When we are valued, our chances of slipping into darkness and depression are mitigated" (p. 86).

Spiritual and Emotional Intelligence as Outcomes of Group Dream Work

In the discussion of spirituality and dream work, Coholic and LeBreton (2007) indicated some fascinating possibilities for the potential outcome of long-term group

dream work in the area of spiritual intelligence (Deslauriers, 2000; Noble, 2000).

Deslauriers (2000) wrote that people who worked with dreams, and specifically in dream work groups, consistently over a period of time developed skills in exploring feelings and associations that also tended to promote psychological and spiritual insight. He specifically connected these 'dream skills' to the concepts of spiritual intelligence (Noble, 2000) and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Deslauriers (2000) wrote that dream work promoted qualities of spiritual intelligence such as authenticity, openness, compassion, and truthfulness as well as concern for moral, ethical, and ultimate values. He emphasized emotional literacy (being able to recognize and talk about feelings) and empathy as qualities of emotional intelligence fostered by group dream work. In addition, he connected the attaining of these qualities to adult cognitive development and the ability for more complex thinking and decision-making. Adding credence to the importance of emotional intelligence in dream work, Ullman (2001b) wrote that the art of listening, especially listening for feelings, and the art of interacting in a non-invasive way were the two essential skills of dream work.

Frey (2007) completed a qualitative research study on the relationship of dream work, spiritual intelligence, and discernment or decision-making. Participants reported that dreams helped them to grow spiritually, and they used the discernment process either to help them understand the meaning of the dream or to understand what action to take from the dream's guidance. Adams and Hyde (2008) explored how two bereaved children used spiritual intelligence to find meaning and value from dreams related to deceased loved ones. They found that both children responded to the dreams in a way that solved a real-life problem and contributed in a positive way to their well-being.

Societal and Cosmic Outcomes from Group Dream Work

Toombs and Toombs (1985) acknowledged that although an individual's dream was initially an inherently personal and private event, once it was shared it became both a public and social creation. Stefanakis (1995) described the process of sharing dreams as essentially a social interaction and that dreamers and therapists (or whomever the dream was shared with) constructed the meaning of the dream through language and social discourse. Ullman (2001) wrote that individuals' dreams not only held personal meaning and clues to unresolved problems for the dreamers, they also held images and metaphors related to current societal and world problems. Ullman (2001a) wrote that by expanding the interpretation and subsequent positive waking actions of dream work from the personal and psychological to the societal and cosmic (spiritual and transpersonal), people in experiential dream work groups could have a positive influence on the unity and ultimate survival of humanity.

Ullman Based Experiential Dream Work Groups

From its creation by Ullman to train psychoanalytic therapists in Switzerland in 1974 (Ullman, 1994), the Ullman experiential dream group has been used solely as developed or has served as the foundation for many dream work groups. The basic structure of the group method is thus: (1) a group member volunteers to share a dream and tells it out loud (2) the group members ask questions to clarify the content and to explore associations (3) while the dreamer listens, the group members express what their feelings would be and what the images or metaphors would mean to them if the dream were their own (4) the dreamer may or may not choose to respond with a personal meaning, and may engage in a dialogue with the group (5) the dreamer always has the

last word, and may bring additional comments to a following session. Of paramount importance in the Ullman model (Ullman, 1994, 2006) are the Safety and Discovery factors, keeping the dreamer in control of what to disclose or accept, thus allowing an atmosphere of safe exploration and discovery. Described below are examples of the use of the Ullman group method that are in addition to those reviewed in the previous sections.

Adaptations of the Ullman Experiential Dream Work Group

Following the basic foundation of the Ullman model, and going along with Ullman's desire to make group dream work available for all people, Taylor (1983, 2009) has conducted dream work groups in many settings, including schools, prisons, and churches. After attending a weekend dream group workshop or training, groups of people have started and maintained their own leaderless or lay led dream groups in their homes or churches. Many groups have continued successfully in this way for several years (from personal communication with dream group members). Taylor has continued to lead and participate in dream work groups, and to offer dream work groups, workshops, and to offer leader/facilitator training. Gordon (2007) has used the Ullman method as a foundation for Mindful Dreaming workshops and groups that include the journey of the hero's quest, active imagination, and the concept and use of dream mentors.

Wolk (1996) described his adaptation of Ullman's Dream Appreciation method (Ullman, 2006) for use in the warm-up phase of a group's psychodramatic exploration of a dream. He wrote that a sense of trust seemed to be established almost immediately and contributed to a working bond as the group members shared their projected thoughts and

feelings about the dream to the dreamer/protagonist. The dreamer/protagonist reported an increased understanding of her dream, and even of more personal significance, reported experiencing a high level of empathic support and understanding from the group members and the workshop leaders.

Krippner, Gabel, Green, and Rubien (1994) presented a summary of two panel discussions in which they presented information on how they have used the Ullman experiential dream work group process with a wide variety of professional and community populations or programs. In using the method with professional practitioners, they wrote that being in a dream group took the mystery out of being a dream work professional. In a graduate student group, participants worked on personal issues and developed collegial relationships in a spontaneous and playful atmosphere. In a community women's group of business, creative arts, and mental health professionals, the safety and discovery factors of the Ullman process made the group just as important as the actual dream work. Finally, a dream work group in a rural setting and which was oriented toward empowering people led eight professional women to form a bereavement support group for children, an innovative health planning committee, and in-service program for nurses, and a family hospice center. Hillman (cited in Krippner et al., 1994) labeled these groups as part of the 'grassroots dreamwork movement.'

Additional Elements in Ullman Dream Work Groups

As mentioned in the descriptions above, many dream work groups that used the Ullman model as a basis or foundation also incorporated activities and techniques from other approaches to dream work. These included active imagination (Johnson, 1986), focusing (Gendlin, 1986; Kan, Holden, & Marquis, 2001), dream interviewing (Delaney,

1993), psychodrama (Wolk, 1996), and a variety of creative and expressive art activities (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Dushman & Sutherland, 1997; Mellick, 2001). Not reviewed in the dream work literature, but in my experience sometimes used in dream work groups along with the “felt sense” of Gendlin’s focusing technique is authentic movement (Mason, 2009). Deslauriers (200) used a method he called the dream body map, in which he asked dreamers to connect to their somatic “felt sense” of the dream through drawing, imagery, and movement. He wrote that he believed that integrated dream work should include some type of creative or artistic activity.

Directions for Future Research

As can be seen in the above review, there are many conceptual and detailed descriptive accounts of group dream work, yet very few empirical studies of either quantitative or qualitative nature. Several of the researchers concluded that further research on dream work was warranted. Pesant and Zandra (2004), in their extensive review of the dream work literature, stated that the overall findings of the research and the reported outcomes from clinical case descriptions supported dream work as a valuable tool for clinicians and as a valid research topic. They added that apart from the Hill model (Hill, 1996), very little empirical data existed on other methods of dream work. Crook and Hill (2003) and Schredl, Bohusch, Kahl, Mader, and Somesan (2000) noted the absence of the client viewpoint and suggested a need for client self-ratings and reports in order to measure the subjective benefits of working with dreams.

Specific to group dream work, Falk and Hill (1995) concluded that in light of the enthusiastic response of clients and therapists to the group dream work experience, further research was definitely warranted. Cohen and Bumbaugh (2004) recommended

further exploration of practical ways to apply dream images in work settings, especially in relation to the long-term life issues that face nursing professionals. Coholic and Breton (2007) called for additional research into the connection of spirituality and group dream work. Provost (1999) suggested further exploration and research with specific populations including older adults, troubled adolescents, and counselors in training.

Delimitations of Proposed Study

Although most of the empirical research on working with dream has been conducted with individuals, my study has been delimited to individuals who have experienced group dream work, specifically within a group that is dedicated to dream work and that uses the Ullman method (Ullman, 1994, 2006; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1989) as a basis or foundation process. This has allowed me to qualitatively explore the experiences of participants working on their own dreams as well as when they are assisting other group members to find meaning in their respective dreams.

Summary

A review of the literature has shown that although the history of working with dreams for guidance and healing goes back as far as recorded history, current dream work in psychotherapy has its foundations in twentieth century theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Fritz Perls. Several models of dream work have been developed and incorporated into existing counseling theories and orientations both with individuals and with groups. Extensive empirical research on the Hill Cognitive Experiential model (Hill, 1996, 2004) has shown that dream work is effective for a wide variety of people even as a stand-alone intervention. Dream work in groups has been reviewed within therapy groups, personal growth groups, and in groups dedicated solely to working with

dreams. Of the two latter types, Ullman's Experiential Dream Group model (Ullman, 1994, 2006; Ullman & Zimmerman, 1989) has served as a foundational method, often augmented with additional dream work activities and techniques. Quantitative and empirical research on group dream work has been sparse, thus this qualitative study on the experiences of individuals participating in group dream work adds valuable knowledge to the field concerning the process and outcomes of working with dreams in a group setting that is dedicated to dream work.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter contains a brief introduction to the topic of dream work as it relates to the counseling field, a description of and a rationale for the general and specific qualitative methodologies used in this study, and the factors that make dream work a researchable topic for the counseling profession. In addition, this chapter describes the research protocol, including the central research question and three subquestions, and specifically addresses researcher biases and strategies to increase researcher sensitivity. Methods of data collection and data analysis follow the discussion of the research plan. The chapter concludes with descriptions of criteria and strategies for verification of the data.

Dreams are a universal experience, and people often wish to discuss their dreams in counseling sessions in order to make sense of their waking experiences (Marszalek & Myers, 2006). Crook and Hill (2003) cited 13 studies that indicated the efficacy of dream work and three studies that indicated the most helpful components of dream work. Crook and Hill (2003) found that 15% of clients brought dreams into individual sessions and that most therapists in the study reported a lack of knowledge in making use of dreams other than listening to the clients' recounting of their dreams.

A review of the current literature on dream work brought to light several relevant themes in the counseling field. These included dream work training (Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Crook & Hill, 2003; Crook-Lyon, Hill et al., Freeman & Vogel, 2005), historical and theoretical dream work approaches (Coholic & Breton, 2007; Pesant &

Zandra, 2004), dream work models developed to fit into existing counseling theories (Barrineau, 1996; Davis, 1995; Dushman & Sutherland, 1997; Koch, 2009; Marszalek & Myers, 2006; Montangero, 2009), dream work models for group dream work (Berube, 1999; Lamb & Hollis, 1994; Taylor, 1983, 2009; Ullman, 1994), eclectic and integrated methods of dream work (Clark, 1994; Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Coholic & Le Breton, 2007; Gordon, 2007; Provost, 1999), assumptions about dream work (Berube, 1999; Wright, 1994; Ullman, 2001), social value of dream work (Dushman & Sutherland, 1997; Ullman, 2001), and beneficial outcomes of dream work (Berube, 1999; Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Deslauriers, 2000; Goelitz, 2007).

The aforementioned practitioners, researchers, and authors describing these themes delineated the scope and variety of methods in the field of dream work to be used as therapeutic tools by the counselor. The literature reviewed included formal quantitative and qualitative studies, descriptions of dream work classes and groups, and theoretical and conceptual articles. As evidenced from the themes listed above, the literature indicated that practitioners who were utilizing the exploration of dreams in small group counseling used an eclectic assortment of techniques from various theories of dream work. Others attempted to incorporate or build a dream work model into an existing counseling theory for individual sessions, and a few developed very structured dream work models to be used specifically in dream work groups.

Most of the reviewed research studies and articles were designed and written from the therapist or group facilitator viewpoint; few gave voice to the personal perspectives of dream work participants on the actual process and outcomes of experiencing dream work; and few stated the perspective or influence of the researchers' personal experiences of

dream work. Each research study focused on laboratory type individual sessions of dream work or on a specific time-limited group, usually of six to eight weekly sessions, again specifically set up for the purposes of a research study. To fill the gap that these factors could not address, this study, using a heuristic inquiry qualitative design (Moustakas, 1990), was conducted from the unique perspectives of seven individuals in 10 actual dream work groups or classes, and was enhanced and informed by my personal experiences as a participant in group dream work.

Rational for Using Qualitative Methodology

Description of Qualitative Research

Creswell (2007) envisioned qualitative research as an intricately woven and many-colored piece of fabric with threads of various textures, sizes, and blends of material. Just as a fabric is woven on a loom, he saw the general worldviews and theoretical lenses (e.g., constructivist, feminist, naturalistic) as frameworks that held together the various approaches of qualitative research (e.g., narrative research, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, case study). He viewed the researchers that employed these different methods as artists creating their own part of the fabric.

Creswell (2007) defined qualitative research in terms of its common processes and characteristics, describing it as beginning with the researcher's philosophical assumptions and worldview and then flowing through a theoretical lens into specific types of procedures for studying a human phenomenon. He identified several characteristics at the micro level that are common to all qualitative methods. These included studying the phenomena in a natural setting rather than a laboratory, focusing on

the perspectives and meanings that the participants give to a phenomenon or process, and the shared interpreting of the data by the researcher, the participants, and the readers.

To extend Creswell's (2007) metaphor, qualitative researchers first examine each of the many small threads at the micro level, and then with the help of the participants, weave all of the threads together into recognizable patterns. This tapestry is then presented to the readers, who interpret the patterns through their own worldviews and perspectives, giving even richer meanings to the research.

Patton (2002) characterized qualitative research as "particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic" (p. 55). He wrote that qualitative researchers take a holistic perspective as they analyze data and search for the unifying factors that make the whole greater than the sum of its parts; they employ inductive analysis as they look at myriads of detailed, descriptive data components and then organize them into larger understandable patterns.

Importance of Qualitative Methods in Understanding Dream Work

I chose qualitative methodology for this study because it allowed me to explore and discover the process and outcomes of group dream work in an in-depth manner with each participant. Although dreams are a universal human experience, and at times contain archetypal symbols and imagery, they are also deeply personal phenomena. Creswell (2007) wrote that one reason to conduct qualitative research is the need for "a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (p. 40). When a person shares a dream during group dream work, the phenomenon goes from being a deeply personal and completely internalized experience to being a public, social phenomenon—a complex social and interpersonal interaction (Toombs & Toombs, 1985).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) wrote that qualitative research “consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). As opposed to a quantitative research design, which often emphasizes a post-positivist worldview, closed-ended questions, and numeric data analysis, a qualitative design emphasizes a constructivist worldview, open-ended questions, and interpretive data analysis (Creswell, 2009). Of the two, the qualitative approach holds the most promise to discover and make visible the process and outcomes of working with the inherently invisible phenomenon of dreams. The qualitative research process simultaneously honors the individual perspective of each participant as it brings all of their viewpoints together to synergistically form a unique holistic pattern and perspective.

The qualitative approach of using multiple forms of data collection (triangulation of data sources) in this study yielded rich and detailed descriptions (Patton, 2002) of group dream work processes and outcomes that took place over a longer or continuous period of time. This combination of triangulated data sources describing ongoing experiences revealed the actions, interactions, and emotions of the group dream work process that influenced and molded the outcomes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In addition, using qualitative methods of sampling - purposeful, criterion based, and snowball (Patton, 2002), allowed the selection of participants who had experienced the process and outcomes of group dream work in a natural non-laboratory setting, and over a period of time.

Heuristic Inquiry Methodology

For this study, I chose to use a heuristic research design (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). Similar to phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), the focus of a

heuristic design is to fully and vividly recreate the lived experiences of participants of a phenomenon from their own frames of reference (Moustakas, 1990). The major difference and the overall unique feature of heuristic inquiry is the “extent to which it legitimizes and places at the fore the personal experiences, reflections, and insights of the researcher” (Patton, 2002, p. 108). Thus, instead of attempting to detach from and bracket off any personal emotions or thoughts about the phenomenon, the researcher nurtures a sense of connectedness and relationship with the studied phenomenon. Another difference is in the final presentation of the data. In phenomenology, the unique experiences and qualities of the individual participants are distilled into a description of the essence of the studied phenomenon. In heuristic inquiry, the participants retain their unique identities even as the researcher portrays them in a final creative synthesis of the data as a whole. “Phenomenology ends with the essence of experience; heuristics retains the essence of the person in experience” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 43).

Moustakas (1990) named his method of inquiry *heuristic* from the Greek word *heuriskin*, meaning to discover or find, as in the related Greek word *eureka*, meaning literally, “I found.” The foundational question for heuristic inquiry is, “What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?” (Patton, 2002, p. 107). Heuristic inquiry methods give researchers a highly structured framework for a disciplined study of the essential meanings that people (including the researcher) give to deeply personal experiences connected with everyday life (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). The heuristic framework has allowed me, as the researcher, to draw on my experiences of the group dream work process from the viewpoint of being a group dream

work participant. It has also assisted me, in my professional role of counselor, to see through the eyes of my present and future clients who bring their dreams to therapy sessions.

Moustakas (1990) listed and explained the following concepts and processes of heuristic research: identifying with the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing (Gendlin, 1978), and having an internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 15-27). He gave an overview of the six phases of heuristic research design: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and the crucial final step, the creative synthesis (pp. 27-32). This combination of factors from heuristic inquiry – intense personal involvement, systematic procedures, creativity, and an end product in the form of a creative synthesis to illuminate the process and outcomes of group dream work has come together to provide the beginnings of new knowledge about dream work for the counseling field, and to set parameters for further research.

Research Protocol

Research Questions

Heuristic inquiry begins with the formulation of a specific and clear theme or question that precisely states what it is that the researcher wants to know, and that engages the researcher's passionate interest and commitment (Moustakas, 1990). The central research question is this study was:

- What are participants' experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work?

Sub-questions were:

- What are participants' experiences of working with their own dreams?

- What are participants' experiences of working with group members' dreams?
- What are participants' experiences of the group leader or facilitator (if there is one)?

Supporting these questions was my personal quest to understand the essence of experiencing the process and outcomes of group dream work. Moustakas (1990) wrote that the researcher is “not only intimately and autobiographically related to the question but learns to love the question...and the question itself is infused in the researcher’s being” (p. 43). Although Moustakas emphasized the intensely personal focus of the heuristic research question he also wrote “...with every question that matters personally there is also a social-and perhaps universal-significance” (p. 15). So it is that in pursuing a study of working with dreams that the topic is at once intensely personal, yet universal in the scope of human experience.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Patton, 2002). In heuristic inquiry particularly, the researcher is inseparable from the research topic, the participants, the data collection and analysis, and the final interpretation. Moustakas wrote that after immersion in the topic, the methodology and the research question arose from the inner awareness and inspiration of the researcher. This presents a significant challenge to researcher detachment and objectivity (Patton, 2002). Although Corbin and Strauss (2008) wrote that researcher objectivity in qualitative research has become a myth, it is still important that the researcher constantly reflect on and document any known or discovered biases that may prevent a complete openness to new information or that may affect the meaning

given to the research (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002). I did this by writing my personal reflections after each interview, and after reviewing each piece of data, comparing my thoughts to the actual data. As I proceeded through the analysis and interpretation process, I returned again to the raw data to assure I was giving an accurate account of participants' voices.

Researcher Assumptions and Biases

The following is a description of my own assumptions and biases. As the primary researcher in this heuristic study, I necessarily had the initial and preliminary bias of intense interest, passion, and enthusiasm for the research topic (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002). Personally, the actual process of dreaming has taken up many hours of my sleeping reality, and unlike many people who say they do not remember their dreams, I continue to have a wealth of rich dreaming experiences ranging from the barest of dream fragments or single images to entire dream "movies," sometimes accompanied by physical and emotional effects that carry over into the waking day. My assumption and bias was that other people, and especially the participants in this study, also experienced this phenomenon in the same way and would be just as interested as I was in processes of finding meaning and beneficial outcomes from dreams. Because of this underlying assumption on my part, it would be possible that my personal presentation as an interviewer would convey an enthusiasm that elicited more positive comments from participants, and perhaps inhibit them from sharing any negative comments about their experiences.

My first memory of "dream work" comes from my early childhood, when upon waking frightened and in tears from a dream of being chased by a large bear, I was

comforted by two older sisters asking me to tell them about the dream and then assuring me that I was safe. Thus, from roots in childhood, I have a positive bias towards the act of sharing a dream.

I also experienced dream work while exploring family of origin issues in a therapy group. The therapist took a traditional psychodynamic approach to dreams, listening carefully, and then interpreting the dream relating it to inner processes, transference, and wish fulfillment. Group members could comment on the dream; however, the therapist held the authority as to the meaning of the dream. From this experience I may unconsciously carry the perhaps erroneous assumption that a person with psychodynamic and psychoanalytical training will know more about the meaning of dreams than the owner of the dream.

My strongest biases come from my experience in a master's level counseling class in dream work and expressive arts, and subsequent Expressive Arts Institutes featuring dream work. In the class, I participated in weekly dream group sessions (three people) using the Ullman method of experiential dream work (Ullman, 2001b), and created and shared expressive arts responses to my dreams (e.g., drawings, paintings, sculptures, poetry, collage, movement). In the Expressive Arts Institutes, I participated in intensive dream work groups of four people that began with the Ullman method and concluded with each member creating and sharing with the dreamer an expressive arts response to his or her dream. Participation in these dream work processes has given me a tremendous positive bias for the value of using the expressive arts in dream work processes, standing alone, or with the Ullman method of group dream work combined with expressive arts processes.

Researcher Sensitivity and Subjectivity

In qualitative research, researcher sensitivity or subjectivity has replaced the traditional researcher objectivity and detachment. Sensitivity allows researchers to use their training, knowledge, and assumptions about the topic to better understand the perspectives of the participants and to inform the entire research process. It requires researchers, as they are conducting the study, to immerse themselves in the data, adding their own experiences and knowledge to the worldviews of their participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Heuristic design incorporated the researcher's subjective "self" as an active participant throughout, experiencing self-growth, knowledge, awareness, and possible transformation (Moustakas, 1990).

Current qualitative research terms that have replaced objectivity and subjectivity are trustworthiness, authenticity, and empathic neutrality (Patton, 2002). Neutrality does not mean detachment, rather it means that the researcher uses strategies to prevent the manipulation of the data into preconceived meanings, and reports all data fairly, whether it confirms or negates biases or assumptions. In this study, I used the following strategies to increase my sensitivity and neutrality (Patton, 2002).

Reflexive journal. I kept a personal journal during the entire research process, both by computer and hand-written. I wrote my personal reflections after conducting each interview, after some email and phone contacts, and throughout the process of data analysis and presentation of the data. This journal writing was a personal record of my thoughts and feelings as I conducted this research. As this was a heuristic study, this reflexive writing was a key part of my role as researcher.

Memos. Memos are written notes about interview and observation data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) called them “working and living documents” (p. 118). Memos can also be running records of self-reflective notes about the interview data. As I listened to, transcribed, and read each interview, I wrote memos of specific thoughts, feelings, and ideas that came to me. I did the same while reading participant journal entries and while immersing myself in the creative response visual artwork.

Member checking. Member checking is the process of returning the transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted data to the participants so that they may verify its accuracy and completeness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). After transcribing each interview, I sent the transcript (with all identifying information removed) by email attachment to each participant and asked for additions, corrections, or deletions. Six out of the seven participants responded to this request, two of them with minor changes, and four with no requested changes. After writing the individual portraits, which combined all of the individual’s data sources, and which included assigning each participant an alias, I sent this interpretive data by email attachment for verification. Four out of the seven participants responded to this request, again with very minor adjustments. I completed this member checking before sending this data for review by my dissertation committee.

Research team. My research team consisted of one doctoral level graduate student in counseling and three persons with PhD degrees in counseling. All were thoroughly familiar with qualitative research methods per their coursework, their participation on multiple research teams, and of course per authoring their own academic research articles and PhD dissertations. I passed each set of data on to a research team

member and asked them to identify themes and qualities and to write their reflections for each part of the data (transcript, journal entry, creative response artwork, and artist statement).

Research Plan

After the approval of my research proposal by my dissertation committee, I applied to the Old Dominion University Institutional Review Board for permission to conduct this study. After receiving official IRB approval and permission in January 2012, I began the data collection procedure on February 9, 2012 and concluded it on May 12, 2012.

Sampling Procedures

In order to obtain in-depth information, insight, and understanding about the process of group dream work, I used purposeful sampling to choose “*information-rich cases*” for the study (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Cases that are “information-rich” pertain to participants who can supply detailed and highly descriptive data regarding the specific research questions, thus enabling the researcher to “learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). I used the purposeful sampling methods of criterion and snowball sampling for this study (Patton, 2002).

The principle criteria for participants were as follows:

- They were currently experiencing group dream work, or had experienced it within the previous six to eight months. This insured that the participants could describe their experiences from a fresh mind rather than from a retrospective viewpoint.

- The dream group in which they participated employed the basic elements of the Ullman Method (Ullman, 1994, 2006) of the experiential dream group as a foundation for the dream work process. In this method, each person may briefly share a dream at the beginning of the session, then one person self-selects to share a dream for the group to “work.” The group members are active participants in the process, at first asking clarifying questions, then exploring the feelings and metaphors, and then making the dream their own by stating their own projections about the meaning of the dream using the beginning phrase of “If it were my dream...” or “If I were dreaming this dream...” The dreamer is then free to respond (or not) in any way that feels safe and comfortable, and neither the group members nor facilitator(s) press the dreamer for additional disclosure. The two main factors in the Ullman Method are the psychological safety of the dreamer and the discovery of the meaning of the dream by the dreamer.
 - Additional elements that could have been present included expressive arts -visual art, movement, poetry, sound (Atkins & Williams, 2007), active imagination (Johnson, 1986), authentic movement (Mason, 2009), or focusing (Gendlin, 1986).
- They were willing to commit the time for an interview, a written journal entry, and one creative response artwork with accompanying artist statement or reflection.

I sought to interview up to 10 participants, and continued the data collection to the point of saturation, which occurred at seven participants. Data saturation occurs when identified themes begin to repeat and when no new additions are revealed from the data

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I attempted as much as possible within the confines of the criteria to recruit participants to include males and females of differing age, race, and ethnicity.

Specific Participant Selection Procedures

To identify and select potential participants for this study, I recruited from a variety of sources. I first contacted by telephone a local licensed mental health therapist who facilitates time-limited (six weeks) weekly dream group sessions for women, and co-facilitates an ongoing weekly dream work group. With her co-facilitator, a licensed psychologist, she also leads dream work training and weekend workshops for mental health professionals. As I had previously attended the weekly women's dream group, and a weekend workshop that she co-facilitated, I had established a relationship with her and knew that members of her groups would meet the criteria for this study. I verbally explained the details of the study and asked if she would disseminate an informational email to her dream group members and former workshop participants. She readily agreed to do so. From this source, I directly gained two participants, one from the ongoing weekly group, and another from a time-limited group and weekend workshop. Indirectly, I gained another participant when one of these referred me to someone from another dream work group.

I posted the details of the study and my contact information on the International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD) website discussion board under the heading of "Research and Call for Research Participants." I received responses from two people from this post, and one agreed to participate in the study. I contacted by telephone a woman whom I had met in a group dream work workshop and asked if she would be

interested in participating in the study, and she enthusiastically agreed to do so. Although I attempted email contact with three fellow attendees of expressive arts institutes, one did not respond and the other two no longer met the criteria for current participation in group dream work. I gained two participants from mentioning my study to a neighborhood acquaintance who has been involved in a dream group for ten years. She agreed to be part of the study and then referred me to a friend who was a participant in another long-running dream work group.

Gaining Entry

As part of the heuristic component of my research study, I immersed myself in the topic of dream work. As a preliminary immersion experience and prelude to the actual study, I attended a weekend dream workshop retreat, “Mindful Dreaming: The Healing Power of Dream Work,” co-facilitated by the above-mentioned therapists. I later attended a weekend experiential and educational dream workshop led by Jeremy Taylor. Taylor is a founding member and past president of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, an author (Taylor, 1983, 2009), and has been an international teacher and facilitator of group dream work for the past 30 years. In addition, I attended a lecture and research presentation by Robert Van de Castle, Ph.D., also a past president of IASD, and a leading dream researcher. Lastly, I enrolled in and attended the six-session weekly dream group for women as mentioned above.

In May of 2011, I attended a five-day intensive institute, “Dreams, Art, and Nature,” a Master’s level course and continuing education experience offered by the Department of Human Development and Psychological Counseling of Appalachian State University, Boone, NC. Attending and participating in these events gave me the

opportunity to make personal contacts with dream group facilitators, mental health professionals, counseling students, and lay individuals who had experienced the group dream work process. These personal contacts expedited the identification of participants and the scheduling of in-person or Skype video interviews.

Measures to Ensure Participant Confidentiality

To ensure participant confidentiality, I personally transcribed all of the recorded interviews and removed all identifying information in the transcript before sending it electronically for review by the participant and subsequently to research team members. I identified each transcript only with a participant number (i.e., PA #1, PA #2, etc.). For each narrative portrait, I gave each participant an alias based on responses in the interview in order to disguise identity, yet retain “the essence of the person in experience” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 43).

All electronic data (e.g., original transcripts, digital photographs of artwork, communications with participants) was kept on my personal password protected computer. At the completion of all parts of the study, including the final document, original artwork was returned to participants, and all audio-recordings were permanently deleted. Paper copies of data including demographics and informed consent forms have been kept in a locked file container and will be destroyed seven years after the completion of the study.

To insure participant emotional and psychological safety, I provided informed consent information, written and verbal, in which I assured participants that they were in charge of any information they wished to disclose, that I would not pressure them to reveal private information, that they had the option to pass on any question, and that they

were free to quit the interview or the study at any time. To cover the possibility that participants' responses could have indicated a need for a mental health referral, or that they could have experienced emotional or psychological distress in recounting their experiences, I provided to all participants the names and contact information of two licensed mental health professionals (the same therapists mentioned above) who also specialize in dream work, and who conduct sessions in person and by phone.

Data Collection Procedures

For this study, I collected data in the form of individual interviews, written journal entries, and creative response artwork with accompanying written artist statement or reflection. I made at least two personal contacts and at least two email contacts with each participant. The personal contacts were an initial in person or phone contact and a face-to-face individual interview, either in person or by Skype video. The first was a preliminary contact to explain the study and what would be expected of them if they agreed to participate, to answer any questions, and to schedule the interview. If they had not had the opportunity to read and review the Informed Consent document, I asked their permission to send it and the Demographics form, as well as the Journal and Artwork Prompts to them by email attachment.

The Informed Consent (Appendix A) described the study, the criteria for participation, their rights, and what would be expected of them. The Demographics form (Appendix B) included items about age, gender, race, the length of time working with dreams and in a dream group, the number of group dream work sessions attended, and the leadership status of the group. The Journal and Artwork Prompts (Appendix D) included

information and instructions for completing the journal entry and the creative response artwork with accompanying artist statement.

I made several email contacts with each participant; two of which were for member checking – first to send the transcribed interview, and then to send the narrative portrait and the proposed alias for their additions, deletions, or changes. In addition, I used regular mail to send informed consents, demographics forms, and art materials to participants whom I did not interview in person. These participants then sent their completed forms and artwork back to me by regular mail.

Individual Interviews

I conducted seven face-to-face individual interviews, four in person, and three through Skype video technology (www.skype.com). I conducted three interviews in participants' homes about one and one half hours driving distance from my home, one in my own home (one participant volunteered to come to my home), and three interviews through Skype (two due to long travel distances to other states, and one because of participant preference.)

Possible effects on the data of using Skype video technology versus in person interviews were taken into consideration. One such effect discussed in the literature was that some participants may not be comfortable with using this technology and thus may not share their thoughts and feelings as freely (Kazmer & Zie, 2008). Another consideration was that although Skype offers video, it shows only the person's head, and thus the researcher is not able to observe the participant's full body language (Cater, 2011). Notwithstanding these limitations, the use of Skype technology, with its

flexibility of time and place scheduling greatly extended the possibilities for participant interviews.

The length of the interviews ranged from 42 to 60 minutes, which seemed to be the time necessary for “ideas, thoughts, feelings, and images to unfold naturally...complete when one naturally brings the story to a close” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 39). Moustakas (1990) suggested that a spontaneous, genuine dialogue format would encourage trust and openness, and that general questions could be formulated in advance. In that spirit, the interview was semi-structured with pre-arranged yet flexible questioning procedures. This allowed the participants freedom to give their unique perspectives and to express new (to the researcher) themes, while also providing information relative to the central research question and sub-questions. The semi-structured interview protocol included the following introduction and questions:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study of group dream work. For about the next 60 minutes, I would like to talk with you about your experience of working with dreams in the dream group. Please share only what you feel comfortable with, and if at any time you do not wish to answer a particular question, you may just say “pass.”

Do you have any questions before we start?

- If I had never heard of dream work or working with dreams, how would you describe a session of group dream work to me?
 - How would you describe it from the viewpoint of a person sharing a dream?
 - How would you describe it from the viewpoint of a group member working with another person’s dream?

- What is your experience of the process of working *with your own dreams* in the dream group?
 - What are your feelings? Thoughts? Physical body sensations? Physical actions?
 - What is your experience of actually telling the dream out loud?
 - How do you experience the relationship with group members?
 - How do you experience the group facilitator or leader (if there is one)?
- What is your experience of the process of working with *another group member's dream*?
 - What are your feelings? Thoughts? Body sensations? Physical actions?
 - What is your experience of responding to group members' dreams?
 - How do you experience the relationship with group members?
 - How do you experience the group facilitator or leader (if there is one)?
- What parts of the dream work process stand out for you?
 - What experiences from the dream work process are vivid or alive?
- What has been your experience of the most beneficial part of group dream work for you?
- What has been your experience of the group dream work that has not been helpful or beneficial?
- What, if any, is your experience of the group dream work outside of the dream group? (Relating to events, people, or life situations outside of the dream group)
 - What experiences do you have from working with *your dreams*?

- What are your thoughts? Feelings? Actions? Relationships with group members?
- What experiences do you have from working with *others* ' dreams?
 - What are your thoughts? Feelings? Actions? Relationship with group members?
- What are your experiences of the structure of the dream group?
 - What is your experience of the size of the group? Length of session? Overall time duration (ongoing, week-end, time-limited)?
- If you could describe a relationship with your dreams, what would it be like?
 - What thoughts, feelings, and/or interactions do you experience with your dreams?
- If you could describe a relationship with group members' dreams, what would it be like?
 - What thoughts, feelings, and/or interactions do you experience with group members' dreams?
- Is there anything else that is important to you about working with your dreams that you would like to share with me?

Reflective Journal Entries

I asked participants to submit one written journal entry on a specific experience of group dream work that had been especially significant or meaningful. These entries could have been previously written material, present-time reflections written from memory about past dream work experiences, or a description of a current reflection. I suggested that if writing in the present, that they write for about 20 minutes or write one-

half to one page. Six out of the seven participants submitted written journal entries, with lengths ranging from one short paragraph to two type-written pages.

Visual Art and Written Artist Statement or Reflection

I asked each participant to create a piece of visual art (drawing, collage, painting, or mixed media) that represented their creative response to their overall experience of working with dreams in the dream group. Participants had the option of completing this artwork at the time of the in person interview with the researcher present or completing it on their own time. I gave each participant an assortment of art materials (theirs to keep) that included an art papers tablet, oil pastel crayons, glue, drawing pen, and watercolor art pencils and paintbrush in a drawstring bag to use to create this artwork. In addition, I asked that they write a 10-15 minute or one paragraph reflective artist statement (e.g., what this artwork means for you, the thoughts and feelings you were having as you created it, or what message might it have for you or others). Six out of the seven participants completed the artwork and artist statement on their own time and sent them through the mail to the researcher in the provided self-addressed postage-paid large envelope. One participant did not submit any artwork or an artist statement. After receiving the artwork, I took digital photographs of each piece of artwork.

Follow-Up Email and Phone Contacts

As a form of member checking, the data collection concluded with a follow-up email contact. After I personally transcribed each interview verbatim, I went through each transcript and removed any potentially identifying data. I then sent each edited transcript by email attachment to the respective participant asking for any desired additions, deletions, or changes to the data. I also invited them to respond with any new

thoughts or insights they may have had since the initial interview. Six of the seven participants responded to this request for member checking, with minor corrections and some deletions.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) divided the process of qualitative data analysis into three categories: (1) data reduction, an ongoing “process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming” the data; (2) data display, “an organized, compressed assembly of information;” and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, “to decide what things mean” and to test for their validity (pp. 10-11). Patton (2002) wrote, “Finding a way to creatively synthesize and present findings is one of the challenges of qualitative analysis” (p. 58). Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 47) presented the metaphor of a sculptor arranging and rearranging pieces of metal to form just the right aesthetical creation. They wrote that, in the same way, researchers often make many attempts to arrange concepts before the findings ‘feel right,’ and that after being immersed in the data, researchers convey their interpretation of the ‘essence’ of the participants’ perspectives.

Heuristic Procedures for Analysis of Data

Moustakas (1990) outlined eight steps of data analysis that embody the uniqueness of heuristic research design while reflecting the basic elements of qualitative data analysis stated above. In these steps, the researcher performs the following tasks:

- (1) Organizes all of the data from one participant, including interview recordings and transcripts, notes and memos, journal entries, poems, and artwork.

- (2) “Enters into the material in timeless immersion” (p. 51) until it is understood and comprehended in detail and as a whole.
- (3) Sets aside the data for an interval, then reviews all of the material from the individual participant; this time taking notes and identifying the themes and qualities in the data. After further study and review, constructs an “individual depiction” (p. 51) of the participant’s data. This depiction includes the qualities and themes and verbatim examples of the participant’s experience.
- (4) Returns to the original data to check the individual depiction for its fit and accuracy in portraying the essential themes. The individual depiction may be shared with the participant for confirmation, additions, or deletions.
- (5) Repeats the same process of organization and analysis for each of the participants.
- (6) Gathers all of the individual depictions, again enters into immersion in the data until the universal qualities and themes are internalized and understood, and develops a composite depiction encompassing the common themes and core meanings of all of the individual participants and of the group as a whole. The composite depiction should be “vivid, accurate, alive, and clear,” and include “exemplary narratives, descriptive accounts, conversations, illustrations, and verbatim excerpts” (p. 52).
- (7) Returns to the raw data, selects two or three participants who “clearly exemplify the group as a whole,” and then develops individual portraits that portray the universal themes and retain the essence of the individual.

- (8) As “scientist-artist” develops a creative synthesis of the essential themes and meanings of the participants’ experiences. This aesthetic creation could take the form of a work of art, poetry, a narrative, an analogy, or a story.

Coding Procedures

Following heuristic design (Moustakas, 1990), I immersed myself in the collective data of each participant, one at a time. I constructed an initial overall case display template or codebook for each participant including major categories and which encompassed all the forms of data (interview, journal, artwork, and artist statement). As the data analysis continued, I added the identified themes, subthemes, memos, and reflections from myself and from my research team members to this data display.

To identify the themes and qualities in the transcribed interview data, I used the phenomenological data reduction structure of horizontalization named and outlined by Moustakas (1994). Using this structure produces lists of statements that describe the topic and are assumed to have equal value. After eliminating overlapping and repetitive statements the essential statements or horizons are grouped into clusters or themes, from which sub-themes and qualities are identified.

In the analysis of the data for this study, I started by arranging participants’ statements under *a priori* or predetermined categories corresponding to the interview questions, journal entries, and artist statements. These included overall experience, experience as the dreamer working with one’s own dream, experience as a group member working with others’ dreams, relationship with dreams, significant experiences, carryover to life outside the dream group, beneficial or non-beneficial elements. In addition, for each participant, one other research team member separately reviewed all of the data

from that participant, identified major themes, subthemes, and wrote memos and reflections. I then added these to the overall data display. After eliminating the overlapping and repetitive statements, I again went through the statements, arranged them into major themes, and identified the subthemes. A third research team member then took a final look at this composite data and added memos and reflections

I completed this process first for each individual set of data, and then for the data from all participants as a whole. After composing an individual depiction of each participant, I constructed a case display analysis table, and wrote a narrative portrait using verbatim quotes to illuminate the subthemes from each participant.

Data Displays

Data displays are visual formats that display data in an organized way. Two types of displays described by Miles and Huberman (1994) are matrix displays, which consist of rows and columns, and network displays, which consist of separate units or “nodes” (p. 93) that are linked together. Another type of data display described by Corbin and Strauss (2008) is the ongoing process of drawing diagrams to illustrate and organize the data. I used these methods to organize and illustrate the themes and qualities that I found as I immersed myself in the data of each participant, and in the process of organizing the data to write the individual and composite depictions and narrative portraits. These visual methods served as valuable references and useful tools in identifying the major themes, in developing the creative synthesis, and in illustrating through figures and tables the overall thematic structures in the final presentation of the data.

Analysis of Artwork and Written Reflections

I applied the procedures listed above to the written journal entries and artist statements or reflections. Before reading the artist statement, I used my inner awareness, intuition and felt sense (Gendlin, 1986) while viewing and experiencing the visual artwork. I then transferred my interpretations of meaning to written form using the “If this were my creative response artwork, it would mean...” adapted from the Ullman method protocol (Ullman, 1994, 2006) of “If this were my dream...” projection phase of group dream work.

Verification and Trustworthiness

Creswell (2007) suggested the term ‘validation strategies’ to denote the accepted means that researchers could use to verify the ‘accuracy’ of their research according to the descriptions from the researcher and the participants (p. 207). Douglass and Moustakas (1985) wrote that the validity of heuristic research was the degree to which the same essential conclusions could be reached from the data after repeated examination. Moustakas (1990) wrote that the only person to undergo the entire heuristic process (forming the question, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis), with self and every participant, was the primary researcher. Thus, this person would judge whether the essential meanings had been presented accurately, vividly, and comprehensively. Patton (2002) wrote that high-quality, credible, authentic, balanced, and trustworthy qualitative data could be gained from using techniques such as multiple data sources, triangulation, and external reviews of the data. To satisfy these general and specific standards of verification and to uphold the rigor of my study, I used the criteria

for trustworthiness described by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the overall believability or internal validity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To be credible, results must accurately represent the experiences of the participants, and state a reasonable interpretation according to the analysis of the data. Credibility thus entails following structured and methodical data collection and analysis procedures (Patton, 2002). To maximize credibility, I used the following strategies: a reflexive journal, memos, field notes, member checking, and triangulation of data sources.

Reflexive journal. Although keeping a reflexive journal is applicable to all four criteria, it is listed as especially pertinent to establishing credibility, and to heuristic inquiry in particular, as it provides ongoing data about the researcher – the human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My journal writings included electronic entries as well as writings and drawings in unlined bound art journals specifically for the research study as well as in a personal journal. Entries included personal reflections, quandaries, and insights as I navigated the research process of data collection, data analysis, and data presentation.

Memos. Memos are written notes about interview and observation data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) called them “working and living documents” (p. 118). Memos can also be running records of self-reflective notes about the interview data. As I listened to, transcribed, and read each interview, I wrote memos of specific thoughts, feelings, and ideas that came to me. I did the same while reading participant journal entries and artist

statements and while immersing myself in the visual artwork. In addition, I wrote specific data analysis memos throughout the process. These memos enhanced credibility by providing continuous real-time reflection on the data, the analysis process, and on my personal assumptions.

Field notes. I wrote field notes immediately following each interview with participants. I described my immediate observations about the participant, the environment, and the interview process. I transferred these field notes to a Contact Summary Sheet and attached it to each transcribed interview for analysis purposes. Again, this immediate on the spot review enhanced credibility by adding to the accuracy of the portrayal of each participant.

Member checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote that member checking – presenting the raw data and interpretations to participants to check for accuracy and completeness – was “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 316). In order to check the accuracy of the interview data, I sent (through email attachment) the transcribed interview with all identifying information removed to each participant and asked them to review it and respond with any desired additions, deletions, or changes. Six out of the seven participants responded and replied to this request with minor corrections or some deletions. In order confirm that I had represented each participant’s viewpoint accurately, I sent each participant his or her individual narrative portrait, which included the identified themes and qualities and the alias I had assigned. I again asked for a review and a response with any desired additions, deletions, or changes in the way I had represented him or her. Four out of seven participants responded and replied to this

request, with minor corrections. All who responded were in agreement with the given alias.

Triangulation of data sources. Using various sources of data collection assists in providing corroborating evidence for themes and patterns (Creswell, 2007), and tests for inconsistencies in the data (Patton, 2002), thus maximizing credibility. In this study, I collected and analyzed data in several different forms. Moustakas (1990) wrote, “Diaries, journals, logs, poetry, and artwork offer additional meaning and depth...” (p. 49). Thus, in addition to individual face-to-face interviews and follow-up email and telephone contacts, I collected visual data in the form of two-dimensional visual artwork, and written data in the form of reflective journal entries and written artist statements or reflections to accompany the visual art pieces.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalizability or external validity of a study. To maximize transferability, I used rich, thick description so that readers can make informed decisions regarding the transferability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Denzin (1989) wrote that thick descriptions “presents detail, context, emotion” and “the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals” (as cited in Patton, p. 503). To present these elements, I constructed an individual depiction for each participant using detailed verbatim quotes that addressed the specific headings of the research questions and sub-questions. I then used these depictions to write the individual narrative portrait, including the verbatim quotes.

Dependability

Dependability refers to reliability and consistency over time. To maximize dependability, I audiotaped each interview, using two recording devices to insure a high quality recording and to take precautions in the event of failure of one of the devices. I also transcribed each recording verbatim, including pauses and descriptions of voice tone or emotional emphasis. Although Moustakas (1990) stated that the primary researcher made the judgment of accuracy of meaning and comprehensiveness, I also relied on a research team of four people with experience in qualitative research methods. These team members read and responded to the transcripts, journal entries, artwork, and written artist statements and assisted in identifying the themes, subthemes, and patterns from the data. This process increased the credibility and quality of the study by refuting any potential arguments of extreme researcher bias if I had been the only person to develop the themes and patterns (Patton, 2002).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the product of the research study – the findings and interpretations – being supported by the data, and it can best be established by having a comprehensive audit trail available for external audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To maximize confirmability, I kept an extensive and organized audit trail of my research activities. Items in the audit trail include: records of contacts with participants, raw data in the form of verbatim transcriptions, journal entries, digital photographs of visual art; field notes; memos; themes synthesized from the data; interpretations; visual case displays and tables; interview protocols; and documents of informed consent.

Summary

In conclusion, in this chapter I presented the methodology that I employed to study the experience of the process and outcomes of working with dreams in a dream work group. After presenting a brief overview of the topic of dream work, I gave a description of and a rationale for using qualitative research methods, and more specifically the tradition of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). I related the factors that make group dream work process and outcomes a researchable topic, stated my research questions, and described my research plan. I addressed the role of the researcher, including strategies that I used to contain researcher bias and to increase researcher sensitivity. After giving detailed information about data collection and analysis procedures, I concluded with criteria and strategies for verification and validation of the study.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) wrote that the desire to go beyond what is known, to go into the world of participants, to see the world through their eyes, and to make discoveries to add to empirical knowledge is one of the most important reasons to conduct qualitative research. My intention with this study was to fulfill that rationale.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the findings from this study that answer the central research question, “What are participants’ experiences of the process and outcome of group dream work?” The chapter begins with a brief overview of the data collection and analysis procedures. The first section of data presentation begins with a demographic overview and a group profile of the participants in narrative and table form. The next section includes an individual analysis of each participant starting with a table of themes, subthemes, and verbatim quotes, followed by a narrative portrait, and concludes with a graphic of the creative response artwork. The concluding section of data presentation describes in detail the six major themes and related qualities of each that emerged from considering the data as a whole from all of the participants, and ends with a table displaying participants’ creative response artworks with verbatim quotes from their artist statements.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis

I began the recruitment of participants for this study from contacts I had made through my preliminary immersion into group dream work in the field - attending lectures, weekend workshops, and participating in a weekly women’s dream group. I continued through posting a notice on the International Association for Dream Work website, and through snowball sampling methods. From 11 personal contacts of potential participants, seven people met the criteria and agreed to participate in the study. One was not able to commit to the time required, and three did not meet the criteria of having

participated in group dream work within the last nine months. All participants were from the east coast of the United States, six from Mid-Atlantic States, and one from a south Atlantic state.

The data collection took place over a four-month time frame. I conducted seven individual interviews (45-60 minutes), four in person, and three through Skype video-conferencing. After each interview, I immediately wrote my first impressions and reflections on a contact summary sheet. I personally transcribed each interview, removed identifying information, and sent the verbatim transcript to each participant by email attachment to check for accuracy and to ask for any additions or deletions. Six of the seven responded to this email request. Six of the seven participants submitted journal entries, artwork, and artist statements through regular mail and/or email attachments.

Following the heuristic methodology described by Moustakas (1990), I immersed myself in the data from one participant at a time. I listened to the recording, read the transcript and the journal entry, and wrote my reflections and memos. Before reading the artist statement, I wrote my own response in the “If this were my creative response...” form. I identified themes and qualities from all of the data and arranged them into categories. I passed each set of data on to my research team members who also identified themes and qualities and wrote their reflections. I constructed an overall case display template or code book for each participant including major categories and which encompassed all the forms of data (interview, journal, artwork, and artist statement).

I used this template to put in the essential verbatim quotes with the themes and qualities that I identified, and incorporated the identified verbatim quotes, themes and qualities, and reflections of my research team members. Using this, I further distilled the

essential themes and qualities of each participant to write the individual narrative portraits, to construct the individual themes and qualities case displays and then the overall themes and qualities narrative and case display. Throughout the process, I wrote analysis memos, made reflective journal entries, made many outlines, and sketched many diagrams in order to organize and synthesize the data.

Participant Group Profile

This section gives an overall profile of the participants; it is a narrative description of Table 4.1, which displays a detailed demographic overview of the seven participants regarding gender, race and ethnicity, age, and occupation. Also included is information about the length of time they have been working with their dreams, the approximate number of group dream work sessions they have attended, and the facilitator or leader status of their groups.

Participants included five females and two males, all of which identified as Caucasian or White. In addition, three participants listed ethnicity: one English, one Australian, and one British Isles. Ages of the participants ranged from 34 to 79 with a median age of 56. Occupations included: one retired chiropractic physician, one retired counseling professional, one Human Services Manager, one Yoga teacher, one court mediator/life coach/teacher, and one student.

Regarding the status of participation in dream work groups, five of the participants were regularly attending a dream group at the time of the interview, one was currently teaching and facilitating a dream work class and group, and one reported no present involvement in a dream work group. The five currently participating in a dream group reported the length of time in their current groups in a range from two years to

sixteen years, and reported the groups were ongoing with no ending date, or as one participant commented, “very ongoing, and very unending.” The approximate number of group dream work sessions attended ranged from six to 1,000, and participants reported working with their dreams on their own, or in a group in a range of 6 months to 70 years, with a median length of 15 years.

Per the facilitation of the dream work groups, two participants reported leaderless or peer-facilitated groups, two reported that co-therapist mental health professionals facilitated their group, and one reported that an academic professional who was also a therapist taught and facilitated the group. Two participants reported that they themselves took on a dual role for each of the two dream groups they attended, serving as facilitators and also participating as active group members in each group, sharing their own dreams on an equal basis with the other group members.

Table 1

Demographic Overview of Participants

Participant	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Race	Caucasian	White	Caucasian	Caucasian	White	White	Caucasian
Ethnicity	White	British Isles		Australian		English	
Age	61	56	56	79	52	34	36
Occupation	Retired Chiropractor	Court Mediator, Life Coach, Teacher	Human Services Manager	Retired	Yoga Teacher	Student	Stay at Home Mom
Currently in Dream Group	Yes	Teaching/Facilitating	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

How long?	16 Years		10+ Years	5 Years	5 Years		2 Years
Approximate # of Group Dream Work Sessions	1,000	25	100's	50+	220	6	50
Facilitator/ Leader	Other: Self: Dual Role	Therapist	Peer(s)	Peer(s)	Therapist	Academic Professional/ Therapist	Other: Self Dual Role
Time Working with Dreams	28 Years	10 Years	15 Years	70 Years	17 Years	6 Months	5 Years
Interview	Skype	In Person; Researcher's home	In Person; her home	In person; his home	Skype	In person; his home	Skype

Individual Narrative Portraits and Analysis Tables

In the following section, I used the triangulated data sources from each participant (verbatim transcribed interview, written journal entry, creative response artwork, and written artist statement) and created an individual narrative portrait and an analysis table for each participant. In exception, the information for Participant #6 came only from the transcribed interview, as he did not submit a journal entry, artwork, or artist statement. I have given each participant a number according to the order of the interviews, and an alias that corresponds to a unique feature of each one's experience of group dream work. This is explained in the narrative portrait and illustrated by a direct quote introducing the analysis table. The analysis tables precede the narrative portraits and give the major themes, subthemes, and brief verbatim quotes from each participant.

Table 2

Analysis of Participant #1: Treasure Hunter

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Passion	"ABSOLUTELY...LOVE my dreams"
	Truthful guides	"never lied to me"
	Health guidance	"a diagnosis...a prognosis...a surgeon"
Protocol	Safety	"dreamer has all the power"
	Owning projections	"If this were <i>my</i> dream..."
	Depth	"unpack one dream"
Dreamer	Enthusiasm	"love telling my dreams. "love having people listen"
	Anticipation	"intense feeling of curiosity"
	Resonance with projections	"extremely excited"
	Cognitive sense	"bing-bing-bing-bing-bing"
Group Member	Collaborator	"What is the story in this dream?"
	Dream patterns Fully engaged	"compelling...engrossing...fun"
Facilitator (serves as facilitator)	Monitor Protocol	"it's 'I, I, I!'"
Meaningful Dream Work	Death	"more at peace"
	Grief work	"assuage...guilt"
Outcomes	Value	"it's a win-win situation" "a tremendous gift" "self-understanding"
	Transformation	"meaningless images (<i>to</i>) coherent narrative" "willing to listen to ideas that, before...I would have discounted"

Potential	Peace	“we’re one species”
	Profound	“better self-understanding and better other understanding”
Overall	Discovery	“finding the treasures”
	Unique	“nothing else I do...like this”
	Intuitive	“ <i>feel</i> the dream...inhabit it”
	Information flow	“to and from the dreamer...asking questions and responding”

Narrative Portrait of Participant #1: Treasure Hunter

“I’m an enormously curious person, and working dreams is a curious person’s nirvana.

It’s like every time I work a dream, it’s like a treasure hunt.”

Introduction and Demographics. Participant #1, Treasure Hunter, is 61 years of age, white, female, and a retired chiropractor. Her alias, Treasure Hunter, derives in part from her likening the experience of group dream work to going to a used bookstore or a thrift store, having the same sense of excited anticipation of not knowing what unique and precious treasure she may discover in her search. She has been participating regularly in dream work groups and workshops for 16 years, logging in approximately 1,000 sessions, and has been keeping a dream journal and working with her dreams for 28 years.

In this profile, the following major themes as well as specific subthemes for this participant are described: her “love” relationship with her dreams, her “dreamer’s choice” experience of the dream work protocol, her “intense...curiosity” in the role of dreamer, her experience as collaborator in the role of group member, her experience as facilitator

of her groups, a meaningful experience of group dream work, beneficial outcomes, her vision for the potential of group dream work, and the overall essence of her experience. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 2 above.

Relationship to Dreams. In addition to the many years of dream work experience, Treasure Hunter brings to the group her admitted absolute love relationship with her dreams:

Oh, I ABSOLUTELY (*big emphasis*) ...(*pause*)...LOVE my dreams. I love having dreams. I love remembering my dreams. I love telling my dreams. I love having people listen to my dreams. I love writing my dreams down. I love trying to figure out, I mean, I am in LOVE with my dreams!

She also brings to the group the guidance given to her by her dreams, as she describes in a series of dreams about a serious health issue: “My dreams have never lied to me. You know, the very first dream, in the literal dream, the first literal dream, I got a diagnosis, I got a prognosis, and I got a surgeon.” Outside of the dream group environment, she willingly talks to people in all areas of her life, including her physicians, about the personal and health benefits she has gained from dream work.

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. Treasure Hunter describes her experience of the structured dream work protocol, explaining that the method is “dreamer’s choice.” She describes this as “The dreamer has all the power so I can share as much or as little as I want,” and “the dreamer is required to do whatever he or she wants, they can respond or not respond.” She emphasizes the importance to her of following the procedure to preface statements to the dreamer with “If this were my dream, it would be about...” or “In my version of this dream...” vs. “Your dream

means...” as this was how she learned that “we own our projections.” Having current experience in two different dream work groups with two dream sharing protocols, she admits that although she likes to “unpack one dream” in depth per session in one group of five members, she also likes the equal opportunity afforded to all six group members to share a dream in the other group.

Experience as the Dreamer. Treasure Hunter says she loves telling her dreams out loud to the group, and in the role of dreamer, she says she often comes in to the group session thinking her dream makes no sense at all, only to discover through the group’s interaction of “unpacking” it, that “bing - bing, - bing- bing – bing” it does so. Although she describes being “stymied” at times in trying to “unravel” some dreams, and that some comments from the group are only “vaguely resonating,” at other times she feels extremely excited when something makes cognitive sense or feels right. Nonetheless, she says that an “intense feeling of curiosity” prevails, and that there is always something that resonates for her in each dream group session. She says that the group members “sort of disappear” as she is immersed in the telling of her dream and rather than interacting with them, she concentrates on feeling the resonance of their projections about her dream.

Experience as a Group Member. In her role as group member, Treasure Hunter says she hones in on “What is the story in this dream?” (i.e., identifying the protagonist, action, and dialogue), and conceptualizes it as a movie, film, story, or painting. She then uses her feeling sense to create a story with personal meaning and offers it to the dreamer in the “If this were my dream...” format. She says she sees herself and the group members as collaborators in the formation of the story.

It's like as if we were all collaborating on a story, and we've got the story line going and um, we've got this background, and we've got these elements in it. And somebody says, "Oh, you know, when I'm in that car, there's something wrong with the steering wheel. So, then I'm immediately thinking, "Does that fit into the story that I've projected?" "No, not really," so I don't really say anything, and then somebody else might say "Well, the road seems to be really bumpy", and you know that fits with my story, so I'll kind of run with it.

As in her experience as the dreamer, she says that her interaction with group members has an impersonal quality and their importance hinges on the ideas that they generate and the elements they add to the story. She compares her relationship to group members' dreams with her own dreams as the love she would have for her nieces and nephews vs. the love for her own children - a love with a lesser intensity. Because she's been with the same group for several years, she has noticed that group members tend to have specific dream patterns as to content or subject. She says she is intrigued by the unique yet similar qualities of group members' dreams. Overall, she finds this process "...very compelling...very engrossing, and...very, very fun."

Experience of Facilitators. She describes her experience of being the group facilitator (as well as group member) in a newer group as someone who is adamant about keeping the group on track for active dream work vs. social interaction, and who is consistent in reminding group members to use the "I" form vs. "you," when giving their dream projections. She admits that although she is "sort of a facilitator" in a longer running group, the members know to follow the protocol without reminders.

Meaningful Experience. In her journal entry submission, Treasure Hunter describes a meaningful group dream work experience involving the first dream she had after the unexpected death of her younger sister. She said that in this dream she had mistakenly thought she had drowned a baby, and that she chose to bring the dream to the group, that it was important to her “because it was a very emotional dream” and “had lots of water images in it.” She describes the outcome of having the group assist her with the dream.

By talking about and hearing projections from the group about the images in the dream, I was able to feel considerably more at peace with my sister’s death. It helped assuage any lingering guilt I had about the possibility of me having any power over changing her life’s course. After working this dream in the group, I felt more clarity around the family “role” I had played of problem solver and caretaker, and the deep emotional impact on me playing that role has had.

Outcomes. She describes the most beneficial outcome of her experiences in dream groups as the widened perspective it has given her on accepting other people’s viewpoints as being as valid as her own. In her own words,

The thing that has been most beneficial to me is – is to get closer to recognizing that everybody has their own perceptions, and that, you know, we’re ten people standing around looking at a painting, and ten people see a different story, and that’s just really valuable to me because I tend to be like many people, I tend to be a little bit rigid, that, you know (*tap, tap sound on table*), “My view’s the best one.” I’m a pretty gnarly person most of the time...I’m very opinionated... but

I've seen myself willing to listen to ideas that, before I started dream work, I would have discounted.

She says that as well as experiencing self-change, she has observed positive changes in group members. She asserts that the dream work process itself has been a win-win situation, that whether it is her own dream or someone else's dream, that by projecting on the dream, she has gained self-understanding and knowledge about her own life.

Vision for Potential of Group Dream Work. In her vision for the future of group dream work, Treasure Hunter sees far-reaching potential benefits for our society and for our world. On the basis of the changes she's seen in herself and others over the years, she states that group dream work can help facilitate "better self-understanding and better other-understanding." She states her belief that "so many things that people are afraid of – in themselves and in others - could be worked through and resolved if they had the opportunity to explore them in dream land." Her thoughts are that group dream work has the "potential to bring peace," and the "potential to help people understand that we're one species." To this end she supports the incorporating the telling of dreams as part of education (e.g. pre-school, kindergarten, high school, college) and community life (e.g. church, town meetings). She believes "the potential for what dream work can do is really profound."

Overall Experience. She admits there is no other experience in her life to compare with group dream work, "There is nothing else that I do in my life that is like this." The source of her alias, Treasure Hunter, is from her own inspired statement of what stands out for her in the process, "Oh! The discovery! Finding the treasures. I'm an enormously curious person, and working dreams is a curious person's nirvana. It's like

every time I work a dream, it's like a treasure hunt." The essence of finding meaning in the dream is stated in her artist statement, "There is usually a process in which the dream initially starts out as meaningless images, eventually coalesces into some kind of coherent narrative to me," and "I feel like the more I listen to the dream, the better I am able to 'feel' the dream and even inhabit it," and finally, also from her artist statement, "There is a porous quality to the experience for me, but I also simultaneously feel grounded and contained within myself."

Although she said that she had "absolutely no idea how to 'translate' one kind of experience into an image...or artistic expression," Treasure Hunter's creative response artwork graphically portrays the essence of her overall experience. As she explains in her artist statement, the circular shapes represent the members of the dream group, and the deeper color circle "represents me, listening to a dream and asking questions about the dream." The dream itself is portrayed by "the many squiggle lines with the dark, double pointed arrow drawn through it." In addition, she describes a simultaneous and continuous flow of information involving all group members: "Information is flowing to and from the dreamer telling the dream and to and from everyone else in the group asking questions and responding."

Plate 1

Creative Response Artwork: Participant #1: Treasure Hunter

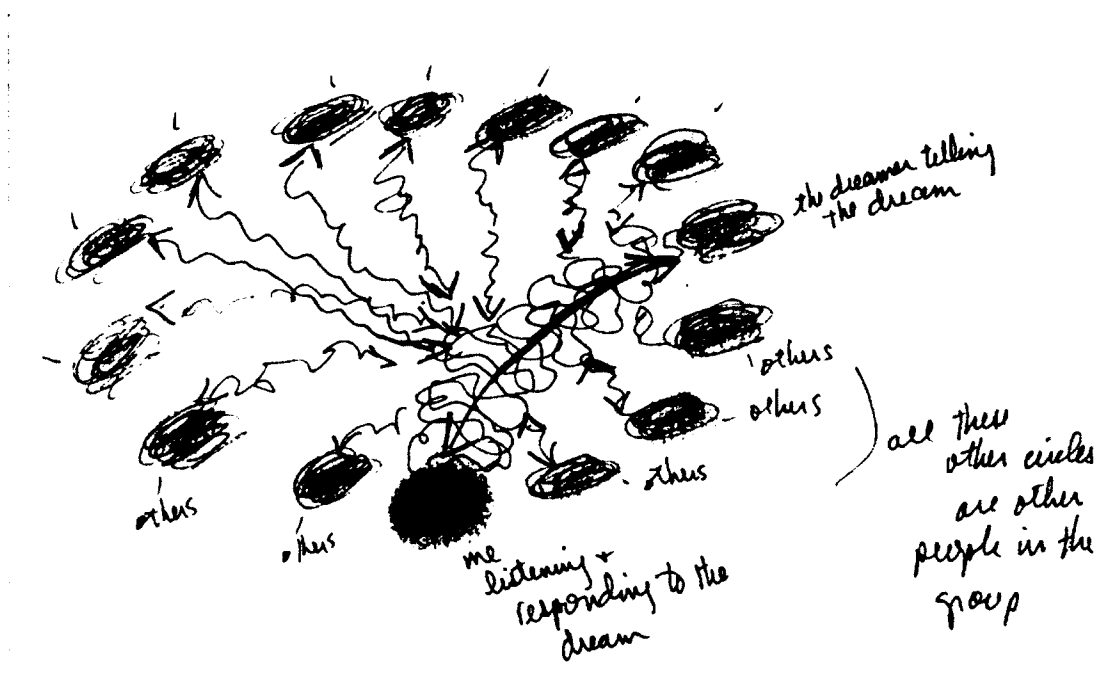


Table 3

Analysis of Participant #2: Investigator

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Gifts	"full of you!"
	Important	"amazing"
Setting & Structure	Two hours	"longer...emotionally wearing"
	Loft	"exposed-on stage"
Protocol	Question & Answer	"back and forth"
Dreamer	Emotions	"Excited; Nervousness; Vulnerability; Hopeful; Courage; Amazed"
	Resonance	"visceral, whole body experience"
	Judgmental	"about what they say"

Group Member	Emotions	“very exciting”
	Information Processing	“painting this picture inside your head”
	Judgment	“internal dialogue”
	Energy	“can hardly sit in my chair”
Facilitators	Depth	“knowledge...multi-dimensional”
	Compassion	“space of compassion and understanding”
	Trust	“a real comfort level”
Meaningful Dream Work	Death	“profound”
Outcomes	Value of Group	“perspective...vital”
	Ongoing insight	“year later”
	Transformation	“profoundly moved”
	Non-helpful	“heavy-handed”
Overall	Flow	“invisible”
	Transformation	“melting pot”

Narrative Portrait of Participant #2: Investigator

“I also tend to forget there are other people in the group when I start asking questions about the dream; I want to bore in like a lawyer questioning his client.”

Introduction and Demographics. The Dream Work Investigator is female, white, and 56 years of age. She lists her occupations as court mediator, life coach, and teacher, and reports her ethnicity to be from the British Isles. She has been working with her dreams for the past 10 years, and in addition to having attended 25 dream group sessions as a participant, she has facilitated private dream work groups, and regularly

leads a dream group as part of a class that she teaches. She began her investigation into her own dreams with individual dream work sessions with a therapist and followed up by attending group dream work retreats and weekly dream groups, all led by licensed psychotherapists. She admits she gets caught up in the excitement of asking questions and nailing down details of group members' dreams. As a group member, she likens herself to a lawyer intently concentrating on questioning a client "What about this? And what do you think about this?"

In this narrative profile, the following major themes and related subthemes specific to Participant # 2 will be further illuminated: relationship with dreams, experience of the setting and group structure, experience of the dream work protocol, experience as the dreamer, experience as a group member, experience of the facilitator, a meaningful experience of dream work, outcomes, and overall experience of group dream work. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 3 above.

Relationship with Dreams. She describes her relationship with her dreams as "little gifts that are delivered, and you open the box –and it's full of you!" She says the experience is "like somebody putting a Christmas present at the end of your bed every night, and in the morning you get to open it and see what's in there." She says that she was led to group dream work by an unexpected realization of the importance of dreams stemming from her personal experience with individual dream work.

I used to think dreams were just rubbish, and when I was getting divorced, I had a whole bunch of dreams. So I went to a therapist that was good at that, and I'll never forget the first dream I worked – and realized was very important, and told

me what I needed to know – and that was just amazing – and I thought “Oh my goodness, this isn’t just brain rubbish, this is really important stuff.”

Experience of the Setting and Group Structure. In describing her experience of the dream group structure, Investigator says that the six to eight week time period “seemed all right,” that for her sessions should be no longer than two hours, “because it’s...emotionally wearing,” and that too many group members (more than six to eight) constrain the dream sharing. She experienced the setting - a large loft-type space- as feeling “exposed - on stage...being questioned by all these people at a distance.”

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. In speaking of the dream work question protocol, she experiences the objective phase as “having eight lawyers questioning you” for details, and the subjective phase as searching for associations or emotions. She describes this interaction phase as “a back and forth, question and answer” process that initiates the exciting pulling together of the threads of the “chaotic jumble of images” into possible meanings.

Experience as the Dreamer. Investigator says that experiencing the role of the dreamer in the dream work group at first brings a “sense of trepidation,” and feelings of “great nervousness” and “a lot of fear.” She explains that from her experience with dreams, she knows that it could “touch into something that is very personal and private” while “sitting here with people I don’t even know – to start.” She describes her experience of the objective phase of the questioning as “being on the stand in a courtroom...you’re having all these questions asked of you and you feel very under the gun. It’s like having eight lawyers questioning you.” She likens her experience of the associative questioning part of the process as being in “live theater” with “no script” and

a “road in the mist.” She says she feels fearful as to “Where is this going to go? What’s going to be revealed to these people and to myself?” and that she might “learn something about myself or my situation that I don’t want to know.”

On the other hand, she says that when sharing her dream, she is “always very excited to tell it” and feels a great sense of relief if she’s been waiting, sometimes thinking “Great! I’m first.” She also experiences feeling “hopeful – especially if it’s a dream that’s confounded me, that having people work on it may actually bring me the information that I really want” and “always amazed at what comes up, at what I discover.” She describes sometimes having a “visceral, whole body experience of response to an interpretation.” She says that because of her personal emotional guardedness, and to protect herself from public catharsis, she explores any strong emotion that comes up for her on her own at home after group time. She describes her experience at times to be “profound” and “mystical,” and states that perhaps “we’re always a little fearful of profound things.”

As a dreamer, she experiences her relationship with group members as helpful or non-helpful based on different factors. These include the basis of trust through previous associations, her personal feelings about them, and her reactions and judgments to the way they work with dreams or to the dream associations they offer her. She says “Often I know some or most of them. I like that, because I trust them. They know me, they know my life and so I feel like they’re going to have a pretty good take on a dream of mine.” She appreciates the clarity of perspective that group members provide from a place of detachment and neutrality.

Experience as a Group Member. As a dream group member, Investigator describes her experience of the process of interacting with the dream and the dreamer. She says she experiences great admiration, wonder, and amazement at the courage of even new group members who freely and openly share even the unpleasant parts of their dreams. She says she feels “awed by seeing...the awakening to understanding that wasn’t there before” and the “transcendence” that shows on a dreamer’s face at the end of the process when the discovered positive and helpful meaning belies the face content of an unpleasant dream.

As a group member, she describes writing the dream on a pad of paper as she listens, not knowing at all what it means - “just a garbled mess” yet trusting that when she comes to the end, it will “start gelling and coalescing.” She describes her experience of the ensuing questioning process:

That’s when you begin to start pulling threads together, and that’s when you start to see what this chaotic jumble of images actually might mean, and that’s pretty exciting, and I get really psyched up about that. I get so psyched up I can hardly sit in my chair.

She says this coming together of meaning is the most exciting moment for her, and that it is often accompanied by a “tidal wave of energy.” At that time she says that often as she starts talking in the “If it were my dream...or if this were my life” format to the dreamer, “it’s almost like it’s not me talking, it’s somebody else talking that understands this better, and this wisdom comes out of me that I don’t know where it comes from” and “sometimes tears will come down out of my eyes...I don’t even realize I’m crying. I’m...talking... letting it all spill out and then I realize I’m all weeped up.” She admits

that this emotional outpouring for someone else's dreams is a split from her emotionally guarded interaction with her own dream associations.

In her experience of interacting with the group members, just as in her role as dreamer, she says she is aware of her inner dialogue and experiences a range of reactions to group member responses. She reports at times judging them for "being judgmental" and at other times finding herself "astonished that they come up with something so profound that I completely missed." In addition she notes that she is amazed that often group members with no prior experience of dream work "have an uncanny ability to land on the most profound piece of someone's dream."

In further interaction with the group members and the dream, Investigator says that during the questioning process, the "picture" that she's been "painting" in her head while listening to or writing the dream becomes more developed and clear, and that "We all sort of start to get more of the same image." She describes it as "like somebody's painting inside your brain," a fascinating process of an "image being developed in your head" and as the dreamer divulges more specific details in response to the group questioning, it evolves and changes accordingly.

OK, so, I'm out in the country, and it's all green, and there's these great big trees with Spanish moss, and as they say all these things this image is being developed in your head, which is fascinating. Then sometimes you have to erase some stuff, you know (*laugh*) when they say, "It was a cloudy day" and you had the sun there (*laugh*) ... so that's kind of fun.

In addition, she has noticed that in weekly groups, the interaction among the group members about their dreams leads to the group members starting to "dream on top of

each other.” She says that this sharing of dream symbols leads to a real sense of connection among the members.

Experience of Facilitators. As dreamer and as group member, she experiences the dream work group facilitators as compassionate and understanding, and feels trust, warmth, and comfort in their presence. She says she knows how “astute” they are and appreciates their “body of knowledge, their depth, and the multi-dimensional way that they have of looking at a dream.” Because of her own excitement and passion in teaching and facilitating dream groups, she admits she has the urge at times to take on the role of group leader, and realizes her tendency to want to monopolize the group when she is in the role of participant.

Meaningful Experience. In her journal entry, Investigator wrote of an experience with a group member’s “riveting dream,” a dream with a “deeply mystical quality...an epic dream...a dream of great meaning.” The theme involved death and the dream work process left all group members in “utter silence,” and knowing they were in the “presence of something profound.” She wrote that a few months later she learned of the dreamer’s own death, and “it became clear what the dream was about, the end of his own life.” She said that the dreamer’s fellow classmates made a stone memorial for him that included an element from his dream. She added, “I will never forget it.”

Outcomes. She says that she experiences continuing benefits from her group dream work sessions. Gaining wisdom from having her own dreams worked on in the group has been “immeasurably helpful” in her life, and she finds that the meaning continues to unfold in her waking life over time, even up to a year later.

I work on the dream, and I may come up with something, and I'll say, "That's interesting, but I don't know what it means." And then a year later, I'll discover that I'm doing something, or I find I'm involved in something, and I'll think back, "That's what that dream meant!"

She applies what others have learned from their dreams to her own life when she encounters similar situations. She says, "When we go through our regular waking life, we notice things from our own dreams, now we have this whole bucketful of dreams of everybody." She is always "profoundly moved by people's dreams and the possible meaning" to the point where "I never come out of dream group the same person I went in." Group dream work is valuable to her in that it gives perspective that is difficult to have by working on dreams on her own – "It's really helpful if you have six to eight people weighing in on this, and who have detachment and neutrality that you just can't get that any other way... that's vital."

She gives the metaphor of trying to cut your own hair, or to counsel yourself, "There's just places you can't reach." The times that she has found group work not to be helpful have been when group members have not followed the "If it were my dream..." protocol and instead have told her what her dreams mean or have been "heavy-handed with their interpretation." She freely admits that even when good insights come from it, being in the dreamer role in the group is an "intimidating experience" for her, and she finds it easier to work one-on-one with a skilled person.

Overall Experience. In her artist statement describing her creative response artwork, Investigator says she is portraying the invisible process of group dream work as "the movement of all of our thoughts and conversations" which she describes as

“ephemeral and free-flowing.” She writes: “I finally realized the real ‘action’ is in the flow of thoughts, ideas and emotions among everyone in the group. It is invisible but it is the ‘main’ thing that happens.” She said she uses color to distinguish each person’s dream and personality “flavor” that adds to the “great melting pot of all the ideas that come together.”

Plate 2

Creative Response Artwork: Participant #2: Investigator

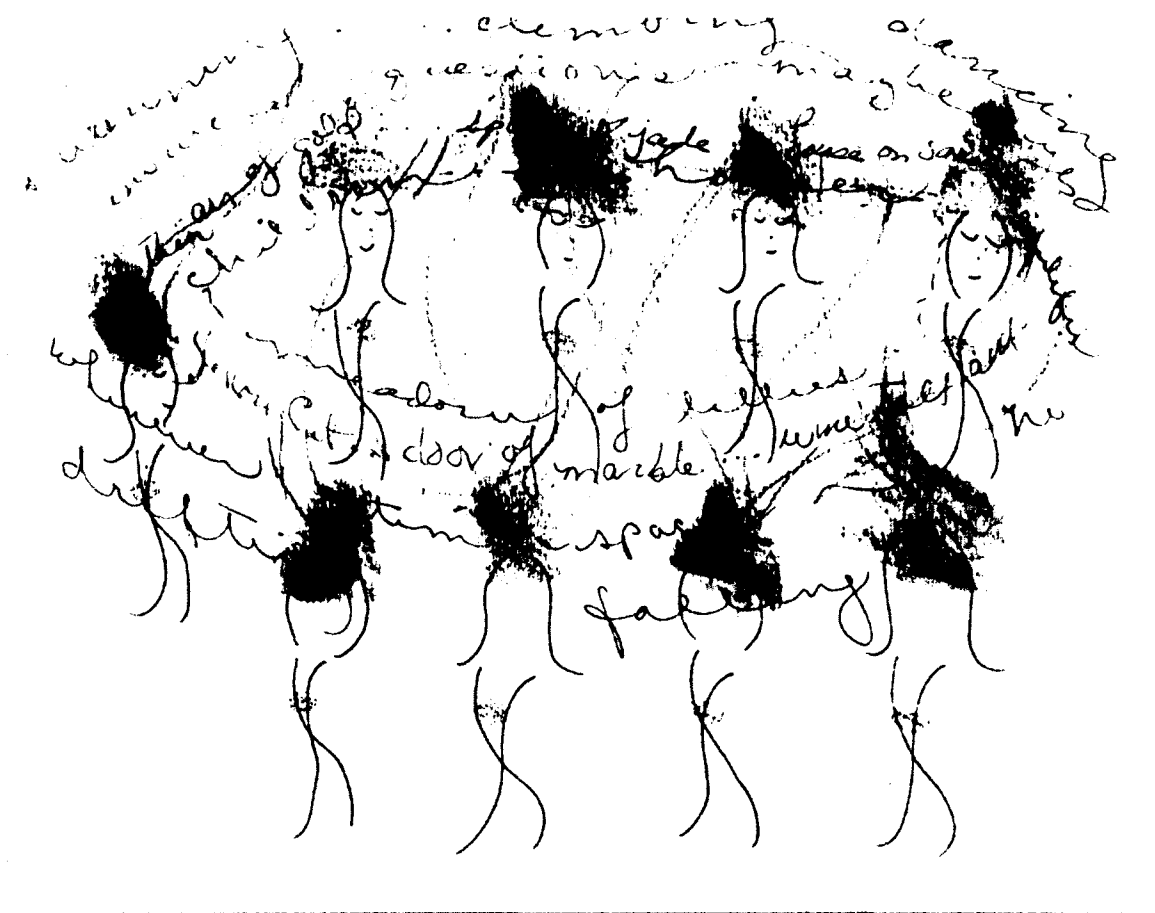


Table 4

Analysis of Participant #3: Sacred Space Dream Worker

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Wise teacher	“meaning of life”
	Welcome friend	“rich dream”
Setting & Structure	Frequency	“momentum and value”
	Opening/Closing	“centering”
Protocol	Question & Answer	“Ah-hahs!”
	Avoid projections	“If this were my dream...”
Dreamer	Passion	“LOVE”
	Excitement	“Ah-hah!”
	Clarity	“crystal clear”
	Trust	“openness”
Group Member	Care & Empathy	“grateful anticipation...disappointment”
	Resonances	“Ah-hahs!”
	Respect	“team effort...deference”
	Flow	“engage each other”
Facilitators	Non-facilitated	“leaderless”
	Guest facilitators	“enrich”
Meaning	Spiritual	“grand spirit”
Outcomes	Relationships	“co-exist...deeper”
	Medical action Homework	“dramatic example” “private take-away”
	Individual	“mindfulness...self-awareness”

Outcomes (cont.)	Transcendence	“here and now level”
	New life view	“symbols & metaphors”
	Value	“invaluable”
Overall	Gratitude	“appreciation”
	Connection	“continuous”
	Giving/Receiving	“insight and energy”
	Transformation	“symbol of frog”
	Sacred Space	“circle of life”

Narrative Portrait of Participant #3: Sacred Space Group Dream Worker

“For me the experience of doing dream work has certainly been a sacred space.”

Introduction and Demographics. The Sacred Space Dream Worker is 56 years of age, white, female, and is employed as a Human Services Manager. She has been working with her dreams for 15 years, over 10 of those years in the same dream work group of which she is a founding member. She has been meeting with this group in the same space three out of four weeks of each month with nine other women, three of whom have also been with the group since the beginning. Her alias, Sacred Space Dream Worker, stems from her many references to her experience of her dream work group as “a sacred time and place.” She says, “For me the experience of doing dream work has certainly been a sacred space.” She adds that the group members “hold the dream community relationship in a sort of special, different place.”

In this narrative portrait, the following major themes and related subthemes specific to Participant # 3 will be further illuminated: relationship with dreams,

experience of the setting and group structure, experience of the dream work protocol, experience as the dreamer, experience as a group member, experience of the facilitator, a meaningful experience of dream work, outcomes, and overall experience of group dream work. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 4 above.

Relationship with Dreams. She brings to the group her relationship with her dreams, referring to them as sometimes a “wise teacher” or at other times an “unwelcome nag.” Adding another element of relationship to her dreams, she says, “the majority of the time, it’s the eager... anticipated, unexpected guest.” The “vast overwhelming relationship” she has with each of her dreams is as “a real welcome friend.” She describes the frustration she feels when not able to capture a “rich dream,” having it “vanish in your waking moment” and thinking, “... I was just about to get the meaning of life!” She experiences the relationship with group members’ dreams as being “part of the community helpers...not quite as personal or direct.”

Experience of the Setting and Group Structure. Sacred Space Dream Worker says she experiences “momentum and value” from the three times per month meetings. Although the full group numbers ten, she says “I’ve been part of a group of four or five where we thought we weren’t going to be enough, and it was –wow- it was very valuable.” In her view, an hour and a half of time allows for the group’s structured processes of opening and closing and working one dream to the “fullest.” Her group has established opening and closing procedures that involve all of the members in the circle. These include starting with “centering” words and closing with a “reading or open gratitude piece.” She says the opening includes “a check-in”, and a go around the circle for “anyone who’s been able to write and capture their dream that week” to read their

dream without response from the group members. She says that this “practice of everybody reading a dream even though we’re only going to work one... seems to...lubricate the process.” She describes her experiences of the opening and closing of the circle as

...a physical, connecting touch, both at the start and end of the circle. What we’re really doing is giving energy and receiving energy... the alternating palm down, palm up... representing the continuity of energy – giving energy and receiving energy around the circle. That’s what we do.

She speaks for herself and the group, “We...think of it as a sacred time and special place.”

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. The question and answer phase of looking at the dream itself stands out for Sacred Space Dream Worker as being pivotal for bringing the awareness of the “Ah- hahs” to the process. She experiences this as a process of asking clarifying questions, and adds that a typical question would be, “What emotion were you feeling in the dream at that point?” During this process, she says that more content emerges, and that in this question/answer phase “some other things usually come up, and sometimes they’re indistinguishable – you know was this really in the narrative, in the plot of the dream? Or is this what I’m putting in there?” She says that during this dialogue, “the magic happens” and the dream brings her to a “conscious awareness” through “symbolical metaphor.” She says that she experiences the sharing of insights in the first person, using “If that were my dream...I would be thinking that meant this to me for my life” as a way to avoid the projection of “me on you” or of “what I think you should do based on what you dream.”

Experience as the Dreamer. In the role of dreamer in the group, Sacred Space Dream Worker says:

I LOVE telling my dreams out loud. I think that's really powerful.

I'm usually reading it. It's...better than telling it because I will often go back and read the dream, and I couldn't have told it in such detail as what I wrote.

She says she finds that telling the dream in first person is more compelling than using past tense, and that at times she experiences it as if she is hearing it herself for the first time. She says that many times she experiences a "thoughtful...a thought piece," an "Ah-hah" that "typically is...a thinking piece." She says that in sharing her dream, she re-experiences the emotion from the dream. She attributes any physical reaction as a component of an emotional reaction. She says she most frequently experiences "a sort of excitement... the 'Ah-hah' emotion...an awareness and uplifted 'Oh, Wow!'" as something that has either been repressed or she has not had access to becomes "crystal clear."

In her experience of the group members, she experiences a "high trust level" that is part of the "shared group norms and expectations" that leads to a "very openness of the receiving of whatever questions come from the group." She says she is eager to hear their questions, knowing that the process will help to clarify her understanding and help her to "think of it in a slightly different way," as well as assist in providing clarity for group members. She says that because a "dreamer is uniquely blind to his or her own dreams," she places "high value" on experiencing the questions, the non-judging, the "Ah-hahs," and the support given. She expressed her appreciation that the group worked one of her dreams in two recent sessions, "Wow! That was generous." She says that

especially affirming is when she sees “all these smiles around the room.” She emphasizes the importance to her of group members sharing insights in the first person, using the “If it were my dream...” protocol, saying that it avoids advice giving.

Experience as a Group Member. Sacred Space Dream Worker describes her experience of being a group member assisting in the dream work process as “one of the neatest parts of dream group for me.” She has a “grateful anticipation” to hear others’ dreams, and disappointment for them when they have no dream to share. She reports comparable emotions and experiences as when she is working with her own dreams, although the varying degree of resonance with others’ dreams affects the amount or intensity of self-disclosure in her responses. She describes examples of her differing ways she may respond:

If it were my dream, I think I would pay some more attention to *this*, which is more of sort of a generic statement than “Wow! If this were my dream, this is what I’m really learning about.” And then I might share something a little more personal, that I really did have an “Ah-hah!” about.

She says that the “ ‘Ah-hahs’ are there whether it’s my dream or somebody else’s and the ‘Ah-hah’ is about me, and not about them and their dream.” She continues that “It’s not about me in that moment, it’s about the work of the dream, but it is sort of shared property at that point.”

In the role of group member, she sees herself as part of a team and group effort, and thus she is mindful of asking questions appropriately, and listening and deferring to other group members’ questions. She puts her hand over her heart to illustrate a reminder gesture the group uses if someone forgets to use “If it were my dream...” meaning “you

need to own that thought yourself,” or to imply playfully “Quit lecturing her!” She experiences this as “ a nice flow of a way to engage each other.”

Experience of Facilitators. Sacred Space Dream Worker reports her group is a “leaderless group” and that “everybody has the same role...the process folds – unfolds without the need for a leader or a facilitator.” She says that although one member may keep track of time and the process because she is more “time-oriented,” the members, through their professions or experiences, are comfortable with human relationships and group processes. At times, in order to enrich the group processes, they have invited guest dream work therapists who have facilitated the session and worked with the group.

Meaningful Experience. Sacred Space Dream Worker’s journal entry of a meaningful group dream work experience describes a group member’s dream that was “particularly powerful for all of us.” The dream content involved four generations of female family members with the dreamer feeling compelled and desperate to lead them out of a remote and isolated setting of “overwhelming beauty and majesty of the natural world, specifically enormous mountains...” She writes of this dream, “I love dreams that explode with metaphor and ‘life announcements.’” Metaphors and themes the group explored included “generations and passage of time, letting go of what’s familiar, the risk of leaving...without knowing what’s ahead, the symbolism of ‘four,’ and existential angst and insignificance.” She wrote that in contrast to the dreamer, she herself felt “anchored” by the landscape and felt it reinforced the idea of a “grand spirit, of something greater than myself.” She experienced “ many Ah-hahs” in a direct connection to her own life situation, “Here I am again in a major life transition, reintegrating as a ‘couple,’ moving, shifting work and locations.”

Outcomes. Carry-over experiences and beneficial outcomes from the dream group for Sacred Space Dream Worker include the relationships she has with the women in her group, actions she takes based on dream work, and qualities of awareness and attention. She says that although the women in the group are friends outside of the group, these relationships co-exist but do not overlap with the dream community group relationship, as if it were “an unspoken piece of confidentiality.” She says, “Probably because I’ve been doing this work with all these women for all these years we’ve sustained deeper and longer relationships.”

Pertaining to actions she’s taken, she says,

Based on a dream I once shared, I did follow up on a sort of medical hunch that turned out to be a really important thing to have done at that time based on the medical situation – that needed to be done...a pretty dramatic example.

Other actions that she takes involve the “homework” that is a follow-up to gain more meaning from the dream, which could be the “seeding” of a dream to ask questions or perhaps reviewing the notes. She gives the example of a “private take-away” after sharing and working a dream in which her recently deceased mother appeared. She said that to resolve the conflict at the end of the dream, the group suggested that she “pick up that dialogue,” saying what she would have wanted to say to her mother, either at home or there in the group, taking the part of both dream characters.

She carries into her life “a mindfulness quality that the dream work brings”, an “awareness of listening and paying more attention...a mindfulness quality” and “a self-awareness...choosing to pay attention to those things that...extend beyond the session...life choices of what you pay attention to.” She has found most helpful the

“different way of thinking about life itself,” through “the discipline of looking at things in symbols and metaphors, and how so much is archetypal.” She says that the dream work gives her the opportunity to transcend the “here and now level of thinking” of engaging only in busy daily activities.

She experiences value in the process of the group dream work discussion, saying it is “invaluable,” versus attempting to reflect privately on her own dreams with “dream book in hand.” She adds that she has experienced another surprising and unanticipated benefit – that of the number of “Ah-hahs” from someone else’s dream. She says, “To get benefit from the group, the group doesn’t have to be working your dream.” Sacred Space Dream Worker says she knows of nothing that has not been helpful for her in the group dream work experience, not even working with “the most terrifying nightmare.”

Overall Experience. In her interview Sacred Space Dream Worker describes her overall experience of group dream work as:

Interested folks coming together to be willing to participate in a community that’s agreed to...pay attention to dreams and what they may be able to provide to each of us, either our own personal enrichment and for that of the group.

She expresses her overall feeling as “gratitude for this experience, and that we’ve shared interests and willingness to be committed to the work and to each other to keep doing it.”

In her artist statement she names and describes the meaning of eight images that represent the important parts of group dream work for her. Three of these are: a continuous path of connection and community, giving and receiving insight and energy, and a frog as a symbol of transitions and transformation. Her creative response artwork

uses the repeating imagery of the circle, and her artist statement describes the essence of the overall spirit of her dream group. She writes:

I chose to use a circle to present these images that speak to my experience of dream work. A circle is often considered an ancient and universal symbol of unity, wholeness, infinity, completeness, the circle of life and the eternal unknown. It can represent the feminine spirit or force, and a sacred space. For me the experience of doing dream work has certainly been a sacred space.

Plate 3

Creative Response Artwork Participant #3: Sacred Space Dream Worker

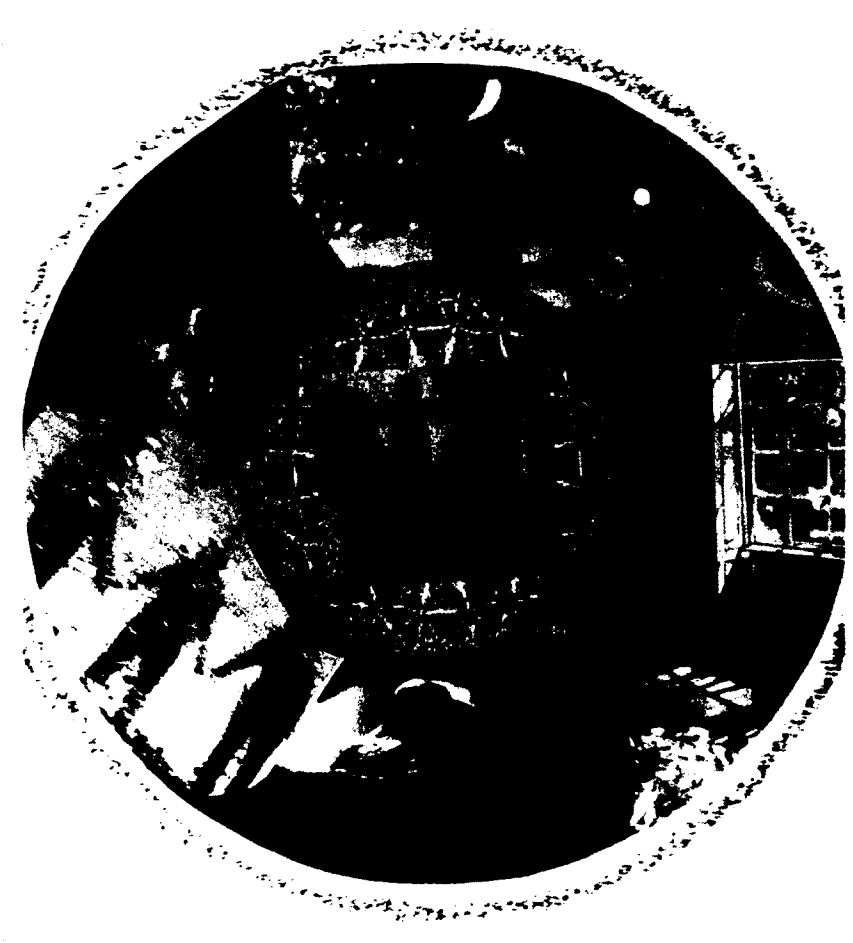


Table 5

Analysis of Participant # 4: Compassionate Dream Worker

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Lucid	“change this...do this”
	Unconscious mind	“tidying things up”
Setting & Structure	Secure	“We lock up the doors”
	Two hour limit	“strict”
	All male	“men’s dream team”
Protocol	Opening	“check-in”
	Comfort/Safety	“no pressure”
	No interpretation	“If this were my dream...”
Dreamer	Emotions	“shyness...apprehensive”
	Vulnerability	“intimate sharing”
	More details	“as people talk to me”
Group Member	Respect	“invite”
	Non-judgment	“no intent of criticism”
	Insights	“Ah-hahs!”
	Dream Patterns	“exploration”
	Male identity	“working or retired”
Facilitator	Non-facilitated	“never...any disagreements”
Meaningful Dream Work	Lucid “re-dream”	“not acceptable!”
Outcomes	Value from group	“obvious conclusions”
	Others’ dreams	“helpful”
	Sharing & Helping	“solutions”

Outcomes (cont.)	Relationships	“friendship kinds of things”
Overall	Stands out	“Discovery...Ah-hah!”
	Sharing process	“sense of unity”
	Potential	“space to grow and contribute”

Narrative Portrait of Participant #4: Compassionate Group Dream Worker

“I’m glad we’re here. I’m glad we’re all here...to help each other.”

Introduction and Demographics. Compassionate Dream Worker is 79 years of age, white, male, and reports his occupation as being retired. He lists his ethnicity to be Australian. For the past five years he has been a member of a once monthly men’s dream group of six or seven (“a good size”) core members, and estimates he has attended over 50 group dream work sessions. He reports that “I have always enjoyed my dreams,” and “I remember dreams from way, way back,” and says that he has been working with his own dreams for 70 years. His alias stems from his report of a lucid dream in which he “re-dreamed” a negative event (described below) because of the stress it would cause for the other person in the dream, and from his attitude towards himself and his dream group members. He says, “I’m glad we’re here. I’m glad we’re all here...to help each other.” He experiences “sympathy... understanding, and tolerance” for group members’ dreams. He continues:

I’ve been working with people all of my life. So I...enjoy or appreciate the friendship kinds of things that come when people share with each other and come to solutions or feel that they’ve been helped in their life.

In this narrative profile, the following major themes and related subthemes specific to Participant # 4 will be further illuminated: relationship with dreams, experience of the setting and group structure, experience of the dream work protocol, experience as the dreamer, experience as a group member, experience of the facilitator, a meaningful experience of dream work, outcomes, and overall experience of group dream work. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 5 above.

Relationship with Dreams. He brings to the group his interest in working with his own dreams and his experiences of lucid dreaming, which he says were especially frequent in his childhood. He said he remembers thinking while dreaming, “I need to change this, or I want to do this, or I think I’ll do this instead of this in the dream.” He says that he broached this topic in the group when he shared a significant lucid dream experience and this led to lively discussion and exploration among the group. He thinks of his dreams as “not subconscious, but unconscious mind – taking care of things, tidying up things in my brain.” He said he realized the importance of dreams after resolving a 50-year recurrent nightmare:

It took me my whole life to figure that out, and it was the dream that got me out of it. So that dream has penetrated my life, and when it stopped, I realized how important dreams are. I began to think of dreams as something that tides you over in life if you pay attention to them.

Experience of the Setting and Group Structure. Compassionate Dream Worker says he is adamant that the group time, kept to a strict two-hour time limit, is spent for dream work, with no refreshments and very little socializing. The meeting takes place in a private upstairs room in a church, and members have their cell phones turned

off. He says, “We lock up the doors so we’re pretty secure at that point – symbolically – no one can get to us.” He says that the men formed the group (“the men’s dream team”) after a lecture at the church by a “guru in dreams.” He says that sometimes “we go on the internet...for rules” and that “we’ve never had any disagreements about how we’re going about this process.” Although the group is peer-facilitated, he takes on the role of group organizer, sending notices about meeting times, and at times advertising in the church bulletin for new members.

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. He describes the first part of the group as an opening “check-in” of “Here’s what’s been happening to us since we met a month ago,” after which each group member has an opportunity to share a dream. He states that he experiences no pressure in this process, and knows that it is OK to say “I don’t have anything this time.” He participates in the group discussion and dialogue, where he and the group members make associations of the dream content in the context of the dreamer’s life, often related to the opening check-in: “People...frequently will begin saying... ‘that’s...related to what you said happened to you a little while ago.’” He says he feels comfortable with the “If this were my dream...this is what I would think about it...” format, and says that neither he nor the group members would ever say, “This is what I think it means.”

“Discovery, and recognizing our subconscious needs” stands out for him in the group dream work process – when someone says something that prompts an “Ah-hah!” insight. He continues:

...recognizing that the dream is not random, that it really is related to your experiences and who you are and that could be good or bad or just routine...it’s

not a great mystery, but we can learn things from our dreams – a lot – by putting things together. Even if it’s just learning “Yeah, I really didn’t like that when it happened in my life.” And that still must be bothering me.

Experience as the Dreamer. In the role of the dreamer sharing a dream with the group, Compassionate Dream Worker says there is “...usually some “shyness about it, because it’s very personal. I just sort of feel a little apprehensive about sharing because it’s an intimate sharing.” He writes out his dream for the group at home and makes personal notes that he uses as a script or model to tell it out loud in his own words. He says he knows that there will be other things “hidden in it,” and that “I will remember things as people talk to me about what they think it might mean. I will remember things that I forgot to say, or I will remember that I did dream that in the dream.” Even if group members’ projections do not fully illuminate his dream, their comments often resonate with him, “Oh, yeah! That really fits in.”

Experience as a Group Member. As a group member, he says he is “slow to be the first one to respond,” often deferring to others out of respect for their preference to respond quickly. He starts his response with “If it were my dream...” and then relates it to the dreamer’s current life happenings or a constant or ongoing life situation. He experiences himself and all of the group members being very respectful and aware of the privacies of each member’s dreams, and feels no intent of criticism or judgment from anyone. He experiences the interaction overall as respectful and without pressure to participate – group members do not interrupt each other, they invite others to comment vs. requiring it, and they welcome comments from each member even if infrequent.

Somebody will have a dialogue with someone, and then you might say, “Does anybody else have any ideas about it?” just to invite people...to comment on it.

But we never pin them down. We certainly don’t go around the room and say that everybody has to comment on this.

He says that even after doing this work for such a long time, he and other group members many times have a large number of “Ah-hahs!” during the process. He said that over time, he and group members have noticed that

...some members of the team dream the same kind of patterns– like one guy – almost all the dreams he brings in deal with huge buildings with great halls in them and big rooms in them. And another guy deals a lot with being lost – driving somewhere and getting lost.

The dream work then includes the exploration with the dreamer of the meaning of the presence or absence of individual dream themes or patterns, and can include humor. A common theme in waking life and in dream life for this all male group is the issue of employment status tied to personal identity. He reports that the men come from various backgrounds, professional and technical, with an employment status of actively working or retired. Compassionate Dream Worker says that they are able to express and explore their frustrations about this issue: “There’s some venting that goes on, but it’s through the dreams, through interpreting the dreams – it’s not just a bull session.”

Meaningful Experience. He narrates a significant and meaningful experience of group dream work through his journal entry. In this experience he shared with the group “a very amazing dream to me” in which he consciously decided to re-dream (within the same dream time) a disturbing scenario in order to make it easier to “handle” for himself

and his partner in the dream, who in waking life was experiencing considerable stress. In the dream he says, “No, this is not acceptable! This is not fair to her! I will just have to do this over with a different result,” and he then successfully dreamed a more positive ending to the dream. Group members had varied responses – some comfortable, others questioning the credibility, and others sharing similar but to a less degree experiences. Overall, this dream prompted them to explore and share their own levels of dream-awareness while actually dreaming and added another level to the group dream work experience – a level that connected directly to waking life and waking consciousness.

Outcomes. Compassionate Dream Worker’s experiences of carry-over benefits from the dream work group include becoming more in touch with himself and his dreaming and the meaning it holds for his life. In addition, he says “Listening to other people’s dreams and understanding how they connect to their life and their problems as well as their successes - their living of life - is really, really, helpful for me.” He says that working with others’ dreams “helps me understand where they are and how they’re dealing with things, and that’s very applicable – to all of us.”

He places great value on the perspective of group members who come up with “obvious conclusions” that he had not been able to see for himself “a long time ago.” He appreciates and enjoys the “friendship kind of things” that come from people sharing with each other, coming to solutions, and being helped by the process. He says of his experience of the relationship with the group members:

It’s a great variety of people in the group – we all like each other and we all work together, but we wouldn’t be on the same ball team with anybody. Our families aren’t close, except as church members, and that’s unusual I think.

Overall Experience. He expresses the essence of the overall group dream work experience through the words of his artist statement: “Each dreamer brings to the group a ‘color’ (the individual’s unique innermost thoughts and dreams) built on their own peculiar psychic needs and experiences. Because of the sharing process, their colors...begin to blend into new variations and mutations.” He describes “uniting different shades and colors randomly into a squall...that gained a sense of unity...,” an unpredictable gathering “except that it contains the communal psychology of being a ‘human being.’ It is the ‘stuff’ from which dreams come.” The “specific communication” from each member’s willingness to share and be together results in “broad senses of understanding...unique in form, colors, and overlappings. It is what we take away from our dream group sessions.” He continues by expressing his appreciation and vision for the potential of one part of group dream work that stands out for him:

Most of all I like the “blank” spaces that represent our space to grow and contribute in various ways by emptiness and potential. Emptiness can and should be a significant and powerful part of our being human. Our dreams so frequently play out in blank unreality.

Plate 4

Creative Response Artwork Participant #4: Compassionate Dream Worker

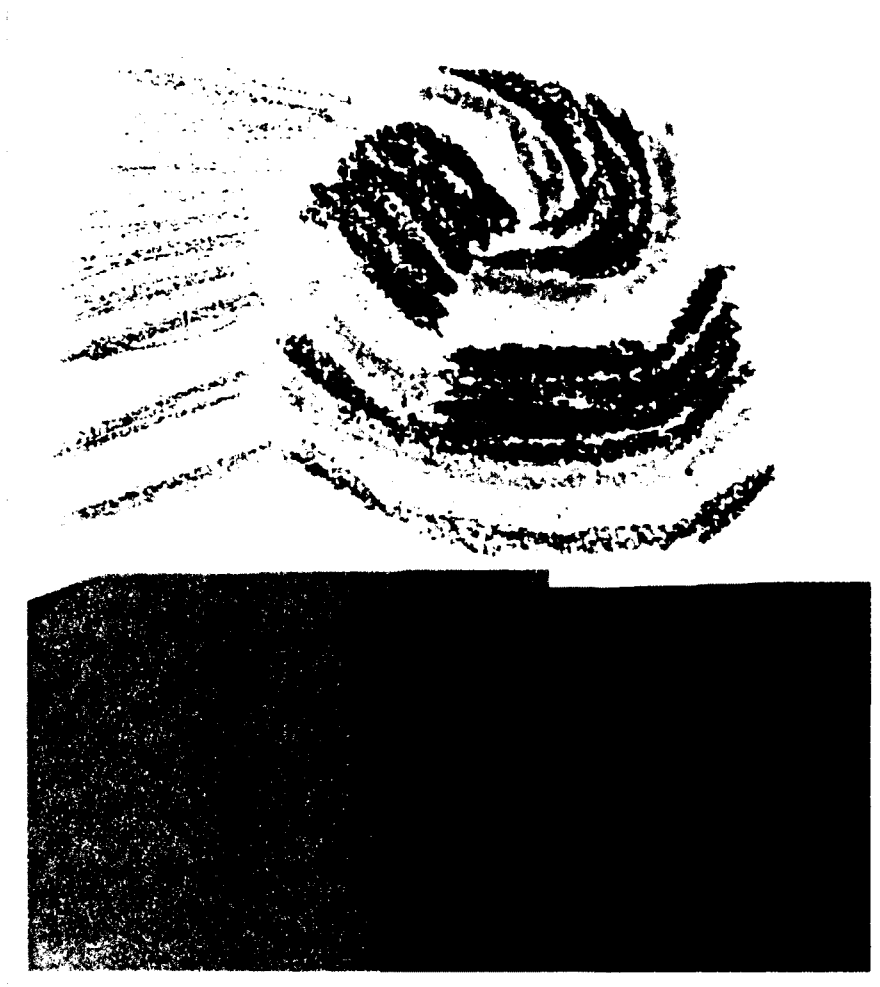


Table 6

Analysis of Participant #5: Integrator

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Friends	"offer insights"
	Gifts	"grateful"
Setting & Structure	Comfort	"comfortable environment"
	Stable membership	"richness...trust"

Protocol	Own interpretation “Honor the Dream”	“If it were my dream...” “Integrate”
Dreamer	Privilege Clarity Exploration Physical Intuitive	“re-telling the dream” “confusion to alignment” “adventure” “body relax...exhale” “How does this feel?”
Group Member	Information Processing Intuitive Intimate Sharing	“gather information” “align in my brain” “mind and belly” “seriousness...joy...humor”
Facilitators	Guides Keeping Structure	“gentle” “holding energetic space”
Meaningful Dream Work Experience	Transformation	“grief...extreme joy and love”
Outcomes	Openness Relationships Value of group Life Decisions Dream Skills Transformation	“emotionally and spiritually” “intimacy...acceptance” “deeper insights” “professional...financial...marriage” “helpful in everyday life” “integration”
Overall	Connection Flow Potential	“join together” “energies merge and flow” “truth/wholeness/freedom”

Overall (cont.)	Transformation	“transcendent experience”
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Narrative Portrait of Participant # 5: Integrator

“If dream work is unwrapping a gift, then how we use it is vital.

It's in the integration that you really use the gift that's been unwrapped.”

Introduction and Demographics. The Dream Work Integrator is white, female, 52 years of age, and lists her occupation as a teacher of yoga. She has been working with her dreams for 17 years and has participated in about 240 dream group sessions. For the last five years she has attended a two-hour weekly dream work group of five to ten people led by two mental health therapists. Her alias stems from the “equal” importance she gives to the lesson or “Ah-hah” of the dream and the consequent integration of the dream into her waking life. She says, “If dream work is unwrapping a gift, then how we use it is vital. It’s like getting a new car, but if you don’t get in and drive the car, what use is it?”

In this narrative profile, the following major themes and related subthemes specific to Participant # 5 will be further illuminated: relationship with dreams, experience of the setting and group structure, experience of the dream work protocol, experience as the dreamer, experience as a group member, experience of the facilitator, a meaningful experience of dream work, outcomes, and overall experience of group dream work. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 6 above.

Relationship with Dreams. Dream Work Integrator says she thinks of her dreams as “friends in a certain way,” like “gifts that periodically come and offer insights,” and that she is grateful for her dreams. She describes the experience of relating

to and hearing others dreams as “like going into the forest as if it were a fairytale and seeing all different kinds of animals that you didn’t know existed.” She says that even though sometimes there isn’t “a particular ‘Ah-hah’” for her in others’ dreams, she feels grateful that she heard the dream. She described a group member’s specific dream image as “a gift to me.”

Experience of the Setting and Group Structure. She describes the group setting to be “comfortable chairs, basically a loose circle... a comfortable environment. It’s not an office, it’s not a living room – it’s not someone’s home, but it has more the sense of comfort than it does office.” She says that she finds that six to eight people is a “good number,” that four is too few, and that with ten, “people will hold back” and “don’t offer as much depth and insight.” She adds, “There’s a point where it is not a small intimate group any more.” She says that many of the people have been in the group for the five-year time period, and “*that’s* nice” because “we really know each other’s stuff, and people have learned the dream process pretty well.” She says that although there is “occasionally the need for new energy,” she appreciates the “richness that comes from being with the same group for multiple years.” She elaborates on this:

This group has been together for a long time, so we know each other’s ‘holes’ and that means there’s a real sense of intimacy in the sense that there is an honoring of the other without expecting the other to be whole or perfect. I think that’s pretty big. There’s not many places you experience that.

She adds that for her, because of being with the group for a long time, “there is trust.”

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. She describes the protocol:

One person would share a dream and the others would question them on the details of the dream – first the factual details, then the feeling and emotional details – any dream work that the dreamer has done with the dream already - and what they feel about it. Then each dream group member takes the dream as their own.

She says that it is key for group members and the dreamer in this last part of the process - taking the dream as one's own, using the "If it were my dream..." protocol - to realize that "the dream is our interpretation...coming through our own experience lens...through our own values lenses." She says that this part of the process "of stirring up of the pot requires a lot of integrity," and that having a structure is helpful. The part of the process that stands out to her is the " 'Ah-has' I wouldn't have gotten on my own...and the richness of the 'opening' really so much like opening a present." She says that she has found very powerful the part of her dream group's process in deciding how one will "honor the dream" and integrate it into waking life. She describes the personal importance of this part: "That's my personality type – 'thorough.' If I'm going to go through all that work, I'm going to make sure it transforms my life, right? I'm not going to have to go through it *again*."

Experience as the Dreamer. Integrator says that she experiences her turn at telling her own dream as a great privilege, that "just re-telling the dream to another...clarifies the dream," and that answering questions from the group clarifies it even further. She describes feelings of self-consciousness and tendencies to hold back or to edit information that she had when she was "new to the work" – as "Oh...I don't want to tell this dream because 'What does it say about me?'" She now experiences the telling

of a dream as a personal exploration, and feels “always... a sense of relief, even if the information may not have been what my conscious ego mind wanted to hear.” She describes it further:

It’s like heading out into a mysterious jungle where you don’t know what you’re going to discover. But, regardless it’s going to be good – even if it was that the tiger ate your lunch...it’ll be good to know the tiger ate your lunch.

Dream Work Integrator describes her experiences when in the role of the dreamer sharing and gaining insight on her own dream. She describes her mental experience to be “like a puzzle coming together – one of those Chinese puzzles or Russian puzzles going from confusion to alignment...confusion in the mind coming to clarity.” She says that at times “the ‘Ah-hah’ moment might be in my belly...an exhale...a softening in the belly – of truth,” and if it were something pertaining to the heart “it could be just that opening around the chest and softening.” She says that if she gains an understanding, she feels “a part of my body relax that I didn’t even realize was tense.” She adds, “There’s something about truth that’s relaxing – even if it’s painful.”

She describes her experience of the group members assisting her as the dreamer as having a very professional, mature feeling because of the “discipline around each person saying ‘If it were my dream.’” Knowing they’re interpreting it in that way allows her as the dreamer to decide if something is an “Ah-hah” or not. She says that there are times that the group’s feedback does not ring true for her. She takes what is valuable to her, knowing the truth and power of it by how it feels, “either intuitively or in my belly.” She describes her experience during this process:

I'm centered in myself in those moments so if someone's saying something to me, I'm listening. I may be writing – I may or may not be taking their notes – but I'm really listening to “How does this feel?”

She says that the insights facilitated by the group members are “much deeper than I would have experienced working a dream on my own.”

Experience as a Group Member. As a group member, Integrator says that she likes to gather factual information about the dream, whether it involves the dream itself or whether it concerns emotions or “alive” issues in the dreamer's waking life. She gives work stress as an example. She says that besides the information gathering, she experiences “an energetic information coming” and then waits “for things to sort and align in my brain.” As she does in her role as dreamer, she relies on her intuition for cues, sometimes feeling an “‘Ah-hah,’ or ‘Oh! This may be what it is,’” both in her mind and her belly. She says that often she will just say what comes to her from “pure intuition,” speaking it out loud, not knowing for whom the message will resonate – the dreamer, the group members, or for herself at a later time. She describes her experience of responding:

First, I'd say, “If this were my dream,” and wait until I answer. I'm very much inside my own body. I'm not externally focused on them. My way of experiencing, centering... is to close my eyes. And I absolutely do that when I'm responding to dreams, because there's something that happens in terms of inner integrity – the inner alignment.

She likens the experience of listening to and working with others' dreams to a multi-cultural experience – going to a different country where there are different ways of perceiving the world and solving problems.

She describes her experience of the relationship with the other group members in this part of the process as sharing “a lot of profound seriousness, and a lot of joy and humor,” with “big ‘Ah-hahs’” as well as “belly laughter.” She describes the process as “deep work” with “profound life-altering moments.” She says that there is an intimacy that comes up in working with dreams and even though group members are “not all a given set,” in this context one can feel very close to someone even though they are very different than one's self.

Experience of Facilitators. As a group member, Integrator says of the two group facilitators that she is “mindful of their presence” and looks to them for any changes in direction of the discussion of the dream. As a dreamer and a group member she experiences them as allowing all members to offer insight, often adding what hasn't been said, and at all times being “very gentle at guiding” the process while “holding energetic space” for the group.

Meaningful Experience. An especially meaningful group dream work experience occurred for Dream Work Integrator when she worked a dream that “started with grief, with a sense of sadness or regret, a regret at the heart.” After the dream work, “it ended with a sense of extreme joy and love.” She describes an “expanded sense of being held in love” that radiated throughout her body and that stayed with her well into the next day. She described another dream from the last year that was “still very alive”

for her from which she accesses feelings of courage and instinctual knowing when she brings it to mind.

Outcomes. Integrator describes her experience of outcomes that occur for her from participating in the process of group dream work. On a personal level, she says that the process has fostered her sense of being more comfortable and “naked,” both emotionally and spiritually, a sort of loss of self-consciousness – “of desensitizing myself to my own stuff.” Relating to the group itself, she says that the sense of intimacy and mutual acceptance of imperfections that she experiences with this group is not something to be found in many places, and that is “pretty big.” Outcomes from the group dream work to her waking life include insights for action and for decision-making. She says she has had many dreams that gave her professional insight, dreams that have given her financial advice, and that one dream helped her to shift her behavior in her marriage, which led to a better relationship. She says:

It’s helpful and useful to have dreams, as information that comes and to have skills around working with dreams. It’s just real helpful in everyday life. To not have that would be like not having one of my senses in some ways (*putting her hands over her eyes and then over her ears*).

She explains the personal importance to her of the integration of her dream work, “It’s in the integration that you really use the gift that’s been unwrapped.” She continues to say that if she is going to put the work into it, “I’m going to make sure it transforms my life, right?” She describes a dream of playing with a baby elephant, and tells how she has integrated the feelings of joy from the dream into her waking life. In addition to the outcomes of working with her own dreams, she says she gets lasting inner value from

every dream told in the group. Her experience of taking the dream as her own is one of joy, learning, and appreciation. She says, “I’m a richer person afterwards.”

She describes the process of group dream work as “very rich...very rewarding...a chance to explore things that are alive within me...before the periphery of full integrated consciousness – things that are pushing at the boundaries and wanting to be heard.” She says that taking part in this process can “jump the changes you want to have happen,” or “enrich in ways that are hard to imagine if you didn’t take part in it.” She would like to share with others who do not do dream work to not be afraid of their dreams, that even if it looks or feels like a nightmare, “there’s information there that is very kind and useful.”

Overall Experience. In her creative response artwork and artist statement, Integrator illustrates and describes her overall experience of the dream group process as a “mandala dream circle...of sharing.” In her artist statement, she describes the images of eight circles (mandalas) surrounding a central circular shape. She writes that each member comes to the circle as a separate consciousness, and as they “join together,” their “energies merge and flow,” and that the central image is formed “from the light of each of us and the light beyond each of us.” She writes that “the group energy, attending to the dream, is greater than the sum of our energies,” and that “we each benefit from participation – regardless of the dreamer.” She states that, “Repeated constituting of the same group generates stability in the structure.” She concludes by likening the dream group to the “knights of the round table - coming together for truth/ wholeness/freedom.” Commenting on the overall significance and meaningfulness to her of the dream group, she writes in her journal entry:

There are times when as a group, we pause in a kind of silence. Perhaps only for a moment. But it is the kind of silence that arises when the moment is rich with transcendent experience. Our dream group, at its best, is a sacred space of communion and transformation.

Plate 5

Creative Response Artwork: Participant #5: Integrator

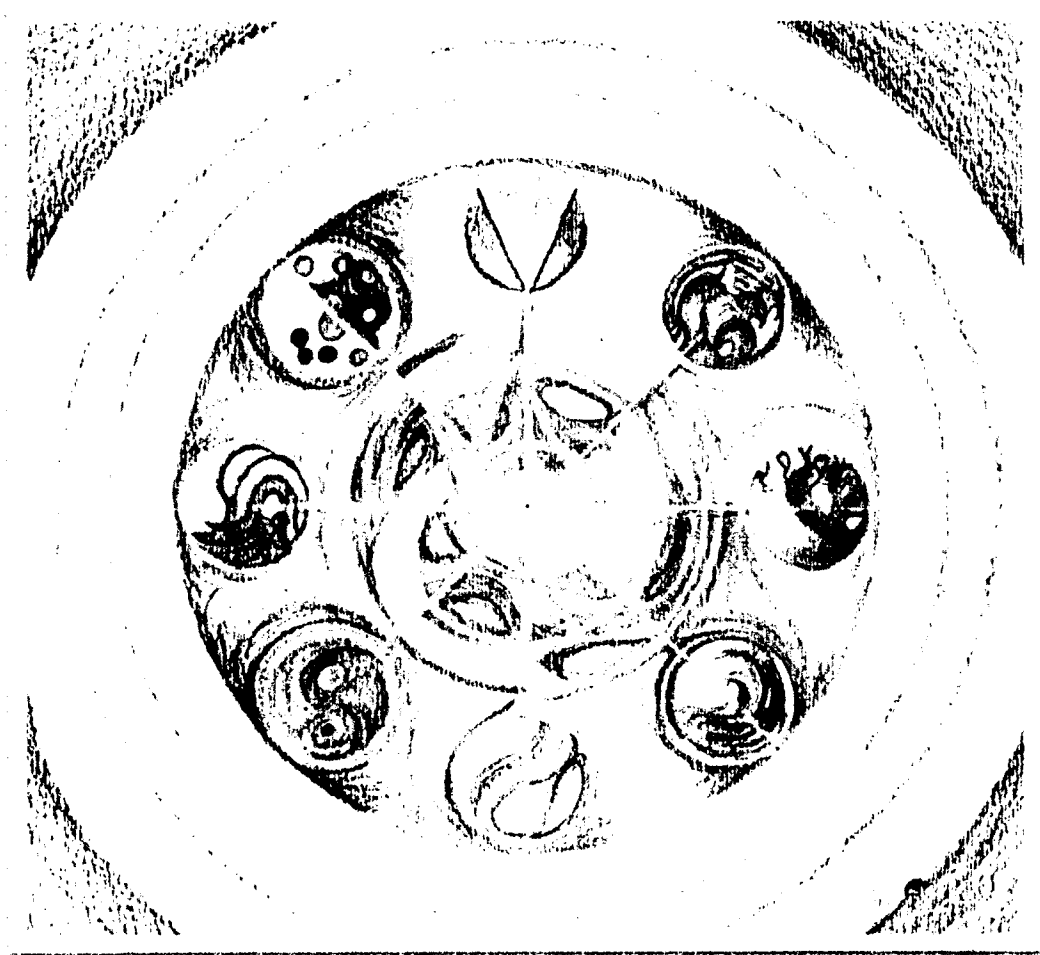


Table 7

Analysis of Participant #6: Catalyst

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Messages from self	"situations...actions...beliefs"
	Story	"meaning"
Setting & Structure	Class	"instructional"
	Full Dream Group	"would take over"
Protocol	White Board	"full dream map...powerful"
	Always Safe	"questions <i>about</i> the dream"
	No Interpretation	"If it was my dream..."
Dreamer	More Details	"Ah! I didn't even see that."
	Release	"cleansing"
	Warming	"nice"
	No Judgment	"everybody cared"
Group Member	Empathy	"close to tears"
	Sympathy	"sad...sorry for them"
	Caring	"help them through"
	Emotions	"crying...laughing...huge realizations"
	Resonance	"quick and short" (or) "Wow!"
	Judgment	"easy to do"
Facilitator	Respectful Structure	"wasn't forceful" "on track"
	Leadership	"group went so well"
Meaningful Dream Work Experience	Recurring theme	"killing...shooting...running"

Outcomes	Self-knowledge	“powerful”
	Emotional Insight	“holding on”
	Guidance	“all the answers”
	Group Intimacy	“very close”
	Relationships	“lasting friendships”
Overall	Emotion	“crying...laughing”
	Openness	“every single part of you”
	Vulnerability	“laying out your soul”

Narrative Portrait of Participant #6: Catalyst

“I was like a...catalyst because when my full dream came out everyone realized ‘Wow, this is pretty powerful. We want a release now as well.’ So then all these big powerful dreams came out.”

Introduction and Demographics. The Group Dream Work Catalyst is male, white, and 34 years of age. He is of English ethnicity and he lists his current occupation as Student. He reports working with his dreams for six months, which includes his recent participation in a six session weekly dream group, an integral part of a dreams and meditation class in his educational curriculum. The class was taught and the group facilitated by an academic professional and therapist. He is not currently participating in a dream work group. His alias, Catalyst, comes from his own description of his role in the group: “I was like a...catalyst because when my full dream came out everyone realized ‘Wow, this is pretty powerful. We want a release now as well.’ So then all these big powerful dreams came out.”

Dream Work Catalyst says he wanted to get the most from the experience as possible, and being a “confident person,” was one of the first members to share a dream. He describes being the first member to fully share a dream and its effects on him:

Emotionally, I had a lot of releases...and especially kind of all of a sudden. You don't think you're holding on to things, like when you lose loved ones, and stuff like that and all of a sudden you find yourself just crying in front of the group.

Although he does not see it as so, he said that his fellow group members, all female, saw this release as a “big thing” for a man to “let go” as he did.

In this narrative portrait, the following major themes and related subthemes specific to Participant # 6 will be further illuminated: relationship with dreams, experience of the setting and group structure, experience of the dream work protocol, experience as the dreamer, experience as a group member, experience of the facilitator, a meaningful experience of dream work, outcomes, and overall experience of group dream work. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 7 above.

Relationship with Dreams. Catalyst says of his relationship to his dreams, “My dreams are *me* – just trying to tell me something,” about “worrisome” past or “*now*” situations, about actions to take, or about deep inner beliefs - “Ah! OK. You’re trying to tell me something!” He says that a good dream can change his mood, that even if he does not know the content, he wakes up happy. Although he struggles to remember his dreams, he realizes “more and more that they’re definitely powerful.” He says he relates to others’ dreams as being able to make them into a story, and that because of the lack of emotional content relating personally to himself, he finds it easier to find meaning in

others' dreams. He adds that he found this to be "strange" as he would have thought it would be easier to find meaning in his own dream.

Experience of the Setting and Group Structure. Catalyst says the first hour of the session was instructional, learning about dreams, how to remember dreams, and ways to meditate after dreams. Even with the instructional component, he experienced the class more as a "full dream group" especially at the end, when they would extend the allotted dream group time (an hour and a half) and "it would take over." He describes this part as "the proper dream group where we would circle up." With ten people in the class/group, he experienced the dream sharing time as limited - which did not allow for everyone who wanted to share their dreams to do so. He describes "a big white board, a huge one" that was used to "map our dream out" and says that he can "vividly see" his dreams that were mapped on the board, even more so than the ones he recorded in his journal, "I can see that map, that white board in my head – just there telling me (*laugh*) like a part of myself. You can't get away from it (*laugh*). There it is up in words!"

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. Catalyst says that the dream group session started with a few minutes of individual silent meditation. He describes the mapping out of a dream, with the facilitator "scribing" it – a "full dream map" – on a large white board as the dreamer tells the dream and responds to questions from the group. He gives examples of questions asked by the group members:

'OK, so you said you were with someone. Do you remember who that person was? Did you feel close to them? Were you frightened by them?' Or they'd say 'You said you were at this place. Can you remember where? Were there cars? OK, do you remember any particular emotion? What was going on at the time?'

He says that these questions led to remembering many other details about the dream. Catalyst says that because the questions were asked “*about* the dream, it was safe... there was never any fighting about it, it was always safe.” In addition, sometimes group members did not speak directly to the dreamer, but through a “third party” of the person writing on the board. His experience of looking at his own completed dream map is “Wow, I’ve let out my whole life, and I didn’t even realize I was doing it...so it was powerful having it up on the board.” He says he was then given the opportunity to speak his thoughts about the meaning, after which each group member would have the opportunity to say “If it was my dream, I’d say...” and that no one would say “Oh, I think your dream means ‘this.’” At the end of the process, he says “we’d piece them together and pretty much move on.”

Experience as the Dreamer. As the dreamer in the group, Catalyst experienced “amazing times” sharing his dreams. When telling his dream out loud to the group, “all of a sudden, a million more details” would come to him, and he would remember, “Ah-h! I didn’t even see that.” He says that saying it or getting it out there “releases it from you holding it in, even though you don’t realize you are.” What stands out for is that “It’s a lot more poignant when you say it to others – not just writing it down - written words.”

He describes the results of telling a dream that he thought was “a face value kind of dream,” with no emotional content which he thought he knew the meaning of: “...just telling it out – like I said whatever it was in me - it allowed it to release so it was very cleansing...and powerful.” He says of himself, “I’m not really one that bottles things up – so it was kind of funny – all of a sudden all of it comes out when you share it with a

group.” He says he experienced this as “warming...it didn’t feel hard...it was nice,” and goes on to say that he guesses the “more you cry, the more you...get out of it.”

He experienced the input of the group members as positive, with no “animosity or badness,” and that even though “there are some things that come out that aren’t always the nicest things...there was no one judging,” and “everybody cared.” He says “it was really nice to feel everyone’s wanting to help you understand it, or to just be there.” As well as “amazing” feedback from his own emotions, he says that he gained a whole new way of looking at his dreams from the insight of group members who captured from his words more than he could ever know on his own.

Experience as a Group Member. As a group member, Catalyst says he experienced “a lot of emotion,” and at times found himself close to tears as group members struggled with issues they didn’t realize they had before sharing their dreams. He says that although he felt sad and sometimes felt “sorry for them,” he preferred to “be there, and embrace them and help them through.” At other times, he says he had to catch himself, as it was quite easy to be judgmental. Per asking leading questions to “pull something out” of the dreamer, he says that all members knew it was all about wanting to understand the dream. He says that after the session, “people would even come up to you and thank you for asking certain questions and...for being there.” Speaking of his role of catalyst for the group, he says that after he had initially let out his “whole dream in a...descriptive long way,” and had gotten such benefit from the emotional release, there was almost “a fight to get the dream out there – ‘I want to go!’ response from group members. He says of the consequent group dream work: “It was a lot of emotion from people – people crying, people laughing, people just having huge realizations.”

Catalyst says that as a group member, he became more or less interactive with the dream according to the interest it had for him:

There's not a lot I can think of to pick apart that dream, so you'd maybe share what you thought of it, but it would be quick and short. Whereas some of the ones you'd be like "Wow!" really interested, and especially ones if it had an effect towards yourself.

He describes the group as a whole interacting with the dream as a process of talking about it and coming up with a name and quick description, like a film title and the theme of the film. The group would then, through the question and answer process, "pick out the guideline of the dream," explore the theme, add the main characters, and then end by pulling together the "different aspects of the different areas." He says this process was "amazing."

Experience of the Facilitator. Catalyst's experience of the instructor/group facilitator is as "a lovely person," respectful of group members – "She wasn't pushy. She wasn't forceful." He credits her leadership and shaping role as a key factor in the success of the group, saying, "The group went so well – because we had such a great leader." He said that if a group member became "stuck," she would ask "a particular question and it would pull more information out of you." He stated that she was "definitely keeping us on track." He noticed that at times she "got emotional" as well, although "not too much."

Meaningful Experience. Catalyst says that all the group dream work experiences of working with his dreams were meaningful to him. He particularly found the work to be helpful concerning a recurring pattern of "killing...shooting and a lot of running away...a running theme" throughout his dreams. His reaction after the group

members had given their thoughts through the “If it were my dream...” process, was “Oh Wow! It changed the whole way I looked at it and also what to do about it.”

Outcomes. Catalyst says that participating in the dream work group taught him a lot about himself, and how to look at his dreams in a completely different way. Whether it was his own dream or others’ dreams he experienced the learning as “powerful.” He says that even though he likes to think that he does not hold things in, he experienced an “Oh! I didn’t realize I was holding on to that.” Although he admits the group dream work did not change the way he did things on the whole, he says that he gained insight and guidance about current happenings in his life.

So, my dreams are *me* – just trying to tell me something, something worrisome from the past or something *now*, or something I need to do, or something deep inside I believe. We know all the answers. There’s just so much else clouding it, we don’t listen to what we’re doing. And dreams help me, yeah, tune to myself and kind of be like “Ah! OK. You’re trying to tell me something!”

He says an added outside benefit for him has been a closer emotional bond with his life partner – both are keeping dream journals and regularly sharing their dreams. He adds that when he does not have a group to share with, he does not see the importance of it so much. He adds that participating in the interview for this research study makes him realize the effect it did have on him at the time.

Catalyst says that members of the dream work group (70% of whom are classmates in their academic program) grew to be very, very close, the closest they were all to get as a group. He says that all were learning things about each other, that everyone cared, that no one was holding back, and that “everyone was safe.” He adds, “I can

imagine that doesn't always happen." He says that "in that moment we really came together...just sharing...made a huge difference." He says that lasting friendships were formed, and there will be "a connection that will stay close for the rest of your life." He says that looking back on the experience, he realizes that the group members remained close for a month or so after the group ended. He says that now even though group members are in classes together, they are no longer sharing their emotions, and they have drifted apart. He says that some of them have since done their own dream groups; however they are not "doing emotional things," and it is different "because obviously different energies from different things can change perception." Nonetheless, he says, "We'll always share that moment."

Overall Experience. Catalyst says what stood out for him was the process of telling the dream and "definitely the ...emotion," either from his own dream or others' dreams. He says, "I remember crying, I remember laughing." He describes his overall experience of group dream as "...describing dreams and all the emotions around them, and exploring things going on in your life at the time, and what you believe certain things mean to you." He describes the essence of his experience of group dream work in these words:

So it's pretty much laying out your soul in front of a group when you don't even fully understand it yourself. So it's definitely putting yourself out there. It's really opening up every single part of you to a group of people sometimes you don't know.

Table 8

Analysis of Participant #7: Energizer

THEME	SUBTHEME	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Dreams	Healing Tool	“life crisis”
	Inner Guidance	“own voice”
	Teacher	“What can I learn?”
	Spiritual	“messages”
Setting & Structure	Public Space	“people come in...curious”
	Privacy	“fencing (<i>imaginary</i>)”
	New members	“unpredictable and varied”
	Open & Ongoing	“unending”
Protocol	Personalized Input	“For me, this means...”
	Dreamer Safety	“observer”
	No Advice Giving	“crossing the boundary”
Dreamer	Clarity	“reflection”
	Information Processing	“like a computer”
	Emotions	“exhilarating” “crying” “empowering”
	Physical	“truth bumps”
	Safety	“open and trusting”
	Vulnerability	“out there”
Group Member	Passion	“love”
	Insight	“light bulb”
	Excitement	“animated”

Group Member (cont.)	Commonalities	“being human”
	Value	“joy”
Facilitator (serves as facilitator)	Structure	“mother”
	Full Picture	“weaver”
	Safety	“boundaries...safety net”
	Own Dreams	“stand-in”
Meaningful Dream Work	Emotional	“overcome with emotion”
	Gratitude	“presence and support”
Outcomes	Understanding	“full depth...spectrum of meaning”
	Relationships	“huge assortment”
	Spiritual	“inner connectedness”
	Appreciation	“human experience”
	Validation	“affirmation...in my gut”
	Energy	“awesome”
Overall	Find Meaning	“play with the dream”
	Authenticity	“mask comes off”
	Transformation	“refreshed, vibrant, truer”

Narrative Portrait of Participant #7: Energizer

*“I just want to keep it going – that energy that I get. The energy boost is
awesome.”*

Introduction and Demographics. The Group Dream Work Energizer is 36 years of age, Caucasian, and female. She lists her occupation as “Stay at Home Mom.” She has

been working with her dreams for five years, starting with a dream exploration on her own of “the most powerful dream I had ever had.” At that time, she realized that her dreams had “*significant* meaning,” that they were a non-threatening way to address a life crisis, and an “opportunity to get in touch with your own inner guidance and your own voice.” Energizer expanded her dream work activities by sharing and interpreting dreams with her sister, and then with family and friends. Not able to find a dream work group, she organized two monthly dream work groups that have continued to meet regularly for the past two years. At the first meeting of three members, she said to them, “I’m here because I can’t stand not talking about dreams and I just want to do this and I just wanted to see if anyone else wants to do this with me.”

Since that first meeting, she has participated in 50 sessions of group dream work and serves as facilitator as well as being an active group member in each group. Her groups use the ethical guidelines for group dream work from the website of the International Association for the Study of Dreams (www.asdreams.org). Her alias, Energizer, stems from her description of herself after each dream work group: “I just want to keep it going – that energy that I get. The energy boost is awesome.”

Energizer describes herself as a self-taught dream worker, and from her personal experience believes that “dreams are a healing tool, and that anybody can use them.” She says that “this dreaming” came into her life as a means of healing at a time of personal crisis and indecision. She says, “It makes me tear up right now,” as she describes waking from that first most powerful dream: “My whole life...at that point shifted.” She continues: “I could hear what everybody else wanted, but I didn’t know what I wanted. So when I connected with my dream state, I went ‘OH! There she is! There’s that inner

voice.’ ” This connection ultimately led her to choose treatments that allowed her to conceive and bear a child. She adds, “How can you *not* be transformed by dreams?” She says now the dream work has become a calling for her, and that she “can’t get enough” of helping people make the connection for themselves.

In this narrative portrait, the following major themes and related subthemes specific to Participant # 7 will be further illuminated: relationship with dreams, experience of the setting and group structure, experience of the dream work protocol, experience as the dreamer, experience as a group member, experience of the facilitator, a meaningful experience of dream work, outcomes, and overall experience of group dream work. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 4.8 above.

Relationship with Dreams. Dream Work Energizer says she has great respect for her dreams, as if they were a “guru,” and that the experience is a “fun mentorship.” She describes her relationship to her dreams as student to teacher. She says that every night as she falls asleep she hopes that she will remember her dreams, and that every morning when she wakes her immediate thought is “What can I learn? What was the experience that I had?” In addition, she believes her dreams are messages from her spirit guides and from her own spiritual self. She describes “an authentic relationship” to group members’ dreams because:

I know the group member on a personal waking life level and when I get to hear their dreams, I get to see a glimpse of their authentic soul. So my relationship to their dreams is an opportunity to put down that person’s mask, and to say ‘Who are they, really?’

Experience of the Setting and Group Structure. Energizer experiences four to seven group members as optimal for the process (fewer than four and non-dream related discussion intrudes; more than seven limits time for sharing and going into depth). She says there are eight core members, and that when more than eight people attend, they form two separate groups. Each of the two groups meets once a month for two hours at a natural foods grocery, with members sitting around tables in the dining area. Even though the groups are in a public area, she describes picturing in her mind a “fencing that goes around the backs of the chairs” so that “whatever you share in a dream group doesn’t escape.” She feels this openness is an important part of the structure, as it allows “people to come in that are curious.” She describes her experience of new members as “unpredictable and varied,” and says, “Those are exciting times for me, because I love having the opportunity to introduce dream group and dream work.” She provides new members with a welcome letter detailing the group guidelines and sharing the group “culture” that has developed over time. The groups are open at all times to new members and “very ongoing – unending” as to duration over time. Energizer says that at one time the group discussed limiting the group to a certain number of sessions, however decided against it as their relationships had “developed so deeply.”

Experience of the Dream Work Protocol. Energizer’s groups start with group members signing in and then sharing dreams in that order. They also sometimes use a “dream catcher as a talking stick,” picking it up as they wish to share a dream, then laying it back on the table for the next person. After a group member shares a dream, all other individuals in the circle share what the dream means for them, “the things they picked up that may be metaphors or symbolic or symbolism for waking life...what stood

out to them, what was interesting.” Energizer experiences this part of the process as “a big brainstorm” where group members “play with the dream,” throwing out their own ideas in order to find meaning for themselves and to assist the dreamer to find meaning.

She says the part of the dream work process that stands out to her, and the most important piece for her, is the personalizing of the input from the group members. For her, group members saying “From my perspective, for me, this means...” takes the “spotlight off of the dreamer,” and allows him or her “to just sit and be an observer.” She adds, “It holds people in check” and prevents them from crossing the boundary into “You know, what you should do about your life – you should do ‘blah, blah, blah.’ ” The process ends when the dreamer says “Thank you. I’m complete.”

Experience as the Dreamer. Telling a dream for Energizer gives her an opportunity to hear it out loud and acts as a reflection of the dream, giving her better clarity. She says that things come out that surprise her, themes or symbols she didn’t notice before sharing it out loud, and it is like experiencing the dream as the rest of the group, as if she had never heard it before. She says that she experiences her voice speeding up and her mind working faster than she can talk as she tells the story line of the dream:

My brain is working on three different things... I’m talking, I’m sharing the dream on one level - verbal expression...another level of my brain that feels like it’s just processing like a computer looking for analogies or connections, associations to my waking experience...another level that’s scanning what I’m saying and looking for emotional statements.

She says of this experience, “My dream interpreting mind has an opportunity to soar! It turns on and I can’t turn it off for three hours after that.” She adds, “I’m starting to speed up now as I talk about it. It’s pretty exhilarating.” She sometimes experiences a physical manifestation of goose bumps or “truth bumps” that let her know when she or someone shares something significant.

She also experiences sharing a dream as “emotional,” as her emotions come up in unexpected places and surprise her as she shares a dream. She describes one instance when she “just stopped and started *crying*,” not knowing why until the group had assisted her. She adds, “It’s a great experience. It’s so empowering.”

Per her relationship to the group members as she shares a dream, she feels “safe,” with “a level of respect...and safety at the table that’s very comforting.” She knows that “when it gets emotional...there’s just a safe place” to address the “heart of an issue.” She says that in sharing a dream, she is “open and trusting,” putting herself “out there, and feeling vulnerable.” She describes this vulnerability:

I understand that by allowing myself to be vulnerable, it speaks to the heart of the other people in the dream group and they embrace that vulnerability.

They know that their turn, that they’re going to have an opportunity to be vulnerable as well.

She says hearing the group members’ perspectives (from their own life experiences) on her dream is an enlightening experience as she receives a “more three-dimensional expansive view,” and can then choose which ideas ring most true for her.

Experience as a Group Member. Energizer says of her experience of being a group member: “I *love* listening to other people’s dreams. I *love* being a group member!”

She listens to the dream and writes what she hears that “feels like it’s in bold – to me.”

She saves these notes and refers to them when it is her turn to share her response, and to interact with the group members’ ideas. She likens her “personalized Ah-hah!” moments to a light bulb in her head, and at times she says she feels so excited she can hardly wait to speak. She says, “I get really animated and I tend to bounce off of other people’s ideas as much as my own, and the dreamer’s reaction to the ideas and everything. I’m just so active (*laugh*) during the process.”

Energizer experiences listening to group members’ dreams as “part of being human...it breaks down the barriers for me of cultural diversity, or age diversity, or whatever background you bring to the table.” The more often group members attend, the more she remembers their previous dream symbols and gets to know their “dream personality.” She says that being able to share her thoughts and insights about the metaphors and symbols in their dreams feels very “empowering” for her because it “validates the common experiences that we share.” She says she has “a sense of family and closeness” with them that she wouldn’t otherwise have. Energizer feels satisfaction when the dreamer takes away something from this process, and experiences “a sense of joy” from the value gained.

Experience of Facilitators. Energizer experiences her role of facilitator for her two dream work groups in two ways, as “motherly” and as a “weaver.” As “mother,” she experiences a sense of leadership as she keeps the boundaries and “structure of the group.” She says that having the structured phrases of the process as guidelines to follow helps her to feel comfortable to “step in” when they are not observed - “You mean to say – ‘for me,’ so in your version this is what it means for you.” She says, “I *really, really*

love that piece...it's so necessary to hold that respect for the dreamer because it's *so* personal."

She monitors the "safety net, and the depth... 'How deep are we going? Do I need to check on anyone?' " She takes the role of "weaver" very seriously, saying it is her job to "make sure that all the ideas are tied together...and that the dreamer has seen a full picture." When sharing her own dream in the role of dreamer, she asks a seasoned group member to "stand-in" for her as facilitator. When this is not possible, she finds herself to be more controlled in her sharing. At times in the group's history when for personal reasons she could not facilitate as strongly, she found that the group dynamic and the strength of the group held the structure and process together.

Meaningful Experience. In her journal submission, Energizer describes a particularly meaningful experience of group dream work. She knew that the dream connected directly to a significant issue in her waking life and would be deeply emotional for her to share. She had recorded the dream a week earlier, and knowing that group time was near, was able to "let it go." She writes, "I was prepared to go to that deep place because I had dedicated that time and space for the purpose." She writes, "Reading the dream was a little scary...and I was attempting to be disengaged...and remain unemotional...and also open to emotion coming up as it needed to." She experienced being "overcome with emotion" and not able to speak for a few minutes when she got to "one particularly scary scene." She writes, "At that moment, I understood the scene...why it was so frightening...and I knew without needing input from the group what it meant for me." She shared her realizations that the "pinnacle scene in the dream" confronted her with the children she had lost the previous year, and that "The essential

awakening was recognizing that I had finally connected to my sorrow and fear surrounding my infertility.” She writes that she is so grateful for the group’s presence and support in witnessing this “moving moment” of awakening in her life.

Outcomes. Energizer takes away from the group and into her waking life the results of the dream work itself and the personal relationships. When she shares a dream, she takes away a “full-depth understanding” that she applies to her waking life in a “rich, tangible way.” She says, “When you take a dream, and you get down into the layers and all the different layers of meaning that a dream has... you can see all the different layers that your waking life has in meaning as well.” She further describes this as “the spectrum” that she gets in dream group that applies to “the spectrum of meaning...from waking life” – something that is hard to get from one-on-one dream work. She experiences the synchronicities that show up in dream group as “powerful,” and takes something valuable from others’ dreams for her own life.

Energizer experiences the relationships from the group as “very, very valuable.” She says, “I have this huge assortment of friends – from different walks of life...from different cultures...different ages, and different *everything*.” She likens these friendships as “similar to my family...they’re spiritual in nature... they’re connected to our inner connectedness... a very comforting, safe, loving, spiritual experience.” She experiences in her dream group a “life connection...that you don’t get from other walks of life,” that is “rare to find in other places.” Group members will often share books, articles, or sometimes even give small gifts symbolic of their dream or waking lives. She says one of the emotional things that she takes away is “a great appreciation for the human experience and the commonalities people share.”

She admits a “selfish” benefit from working with group members’ dreams, that it is a “validating experience” in that every time she works with others’ dreams she receives an “affirmation...in my gut” that “*Yes, (her name), this is true. Yes, this is real and yes, you know how to do it.*” She says that her mind thinks in metaphors and when she found dream work, she felt she was “home” and knew “This is what I’m supposed to do!” (As she spoke these words in the interview, she said, “See, I have chill bumps,” and as she continued her description, the Skype video connection became frozen with no sound. She commented that “my high just overpowered the...” and the connection froze for the second time.) She says she leaves the group feeling good about herself and validated about the PhD program she has found that will allow her to make dream work into a career path, and to “make a difference with it.”

In addition, Energizer takes away “a highly spiritual experience,” saying that her excitement, passion, and joy are very spiritual because of her view of dreams as symbolic, and as messages from her spiritual self and spirit guides. She says that immediate outcomes for her are the high energy and physical excitement that stay with her for hours after the group.

Overall Experience. Energizer describes group dream work as “an opportunity...to share a dream with a group of fellow dreamers, and then we all get to play with the dream to try to find the symbols and to find their meaning for us.” In her artist statement Energizer explains the meaning of her image, which “conveys my experience of the most powerful aspect of dream group work.” She writes that in her experience, people “come to the table wearing their waking-self masks”; the faded masks in the picture express what “we perceive to be the image we’re projecting – niceness,

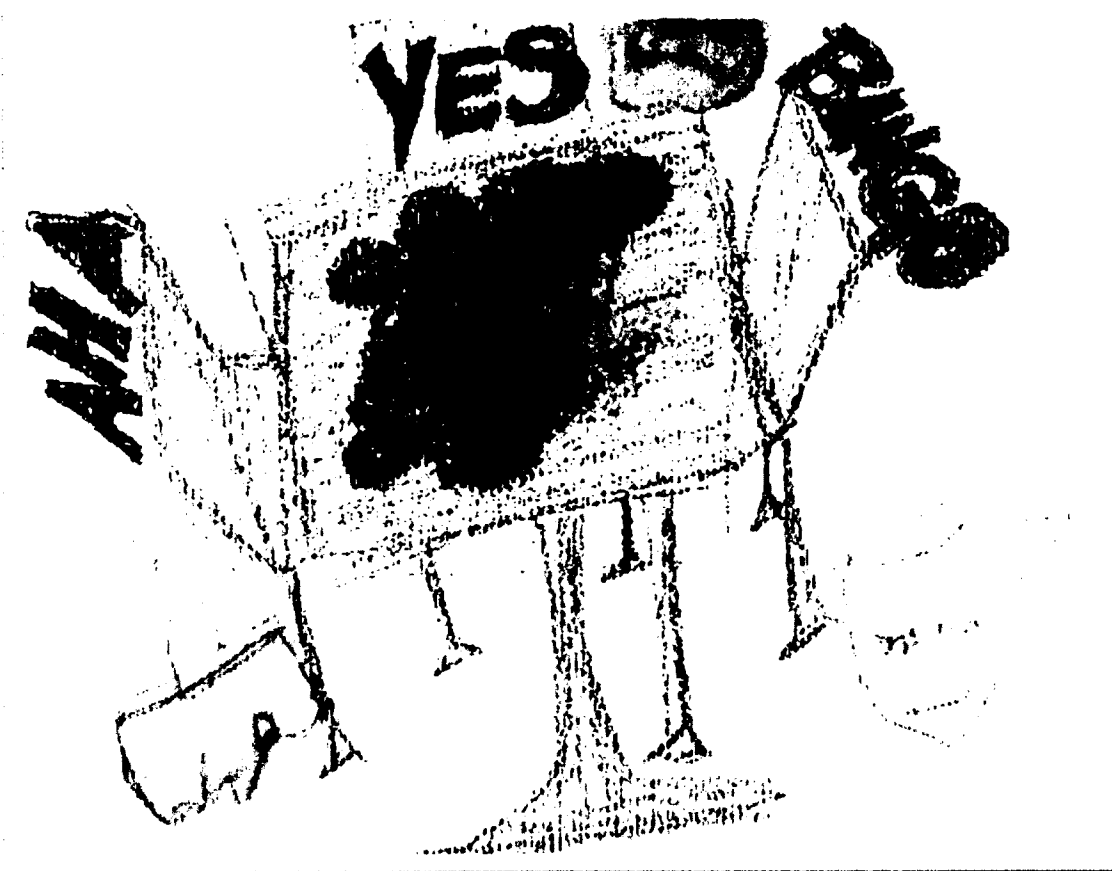
patience, joy, contentment, etc.” She continues, “Something magical happens when people tell a dream; that mask comes off and they lay authentic parts of themselves out on the table for everyone to see and interact with.” She describes the process and outcome of this process for group members:

By coming to dream group we all agree to open ourselves up a little bit and to allow our souls to be seen. When we share the dream group experience we peel off and shed the top protective layer of ourselves. What is left is an under layer- a vibrant new, colorful, powerful expression of ourselves. When we let that color be added to the color of others at the group, we find ourselves connecting to our own color with insight and awareness that changes our lives outside of group as well.

Of the outcome for herself, she writes, “I leave dream group feeling refreshed, vibrant, truer, and more colorful for having had the experience.”

Plate 6

Creative Response Artwork: Participant #7: Energizer

**Overall Themes and Subthemes**

Six major themes emerged from the synthesis of the data: Parameters, Space, Internal Activations, Connections, Transformations, and Integrations. The Parameters category includes the preliminary factors set in place that provide the necessary structure and focus for the dream work group - the physical setting, the number of people in the group, and time elements. The Space category describes the psychological space created by the boundaries of the Ullman group dream work procedures and that are held in place by group members' self-monitoring or by the facilitator(s). Inner Activations includes

the dreams, the emotions, and thoughts that precede group members' outer expressions and which fuel the connections with group members. The Connections category includes the exchanging, giving, and receiving of ideas, emotions, and energies through the vehicle of the dream. The Transformations theme describes the new qualities of the dream, the individual, and the group as a result of the process of group dream work. Finally, the Integrations theme identifies the outcomes gained through the group dream work process while participating in the group process and for the participant's life outside of the dream work group. The subtheme qualities of discovery and insight are woven throughout all of the main themes.

Table 9 is a case display outline of the six overall themes and subtheme qualities that emerged from the synthesis of the individual participants' data. Following the table is a detailed narrative description of the major themes and related subthemes.

Table 9

Major Themes and Subthemes

Major Themes	Subthemes
1: Parameters	1.1: Physical Setting 1.2: Number in Group 1.3: Time Elements
2: Space	2.1: Safety, Comfort, and Warmth 2.2: Respect 2.3: Facilitator(s) Role
3: Inner Activations	3.1: Emotions 3.2: Information Processing

3: Inner Activations (cont.)	3.3: Moments of Insight 3.4: Empathy, Sympathy, and Altruism
4: Connections	4.1: Outer Expressions 4.2: Question and Answer 4.3: Sharing Insights 4.4: Resonances 4.5: Flow
5: Transformations	5.1: Of the Dream 5.2: Of the Individual 5.3: Of the Group
6: Integrations	6.1: Benefits from the Process 6.2: Relationships 6.3: Significant Dream Work Experiences 6.4: Individual Outcomes 6.5: Vision and Potential

Theme 1: Parameters

The parameters theme includes the preliminary factors set in place that provide the necessary structure and focus for the dream work group. Subthemes in this category include the physical setting, the number of people in the group, and time elements (length, frequency, and duration).

Subtheme 1.1: Physical Setting. Six of the seven participants described a variety of physical settings for their dream work groups. These settings ranged from Sacred Space Dream Worker's group meeting "at the same person's house all these

years” (ten years) to Energizer’s two groups meeting in the dining area of a public location, which “allows people to come in that are curious.” Other settings included “a big loft type space” (Investigator), an upstairs room of a church (Compassionate Dream Worker), which “gives organizational meaning to what we’re doing,” a classroom (Catalyst), and a professional space described as “not an office – more of the sense of comfort than it does office” (Integrator).

Subtheme 1.2: Number of people in the group. All participants offered their observations of the optimum number of people for a dream work group. While Catalyst reported “approximately ten” class members in his group, others reported lesser numbers. Investigator said the group was “usually six to eight people,” and if there were “too many people in the group, there was not enough time to work on dreams.” Sacred Space Dream worker reported the “ideal number is six to ten,” however she had been surprised to find value in the group with only four members present. Compassionate Dream Worker reported “a core group of about six or seven” in his all male group. Integrator observed that “six to eight is a good number” and “ten feels like too many – people don’t offer as much depth and insight.” Treasure Hunter said that in one of her groups with seven members, all try to share a dream, which does not allow time to “unpack” the dreams as in her other group of five members in which they work one dream per session, and “get deeper in the dream.” Energizer commented that “between four and seven...feels like the perfect number,” and that when eight or more people came to the session, they would split into two separate groups.

Subtheme 1.3: Time Elements. Participants reported their experiences of the time elements: the length of each group session, the frequency of the meetings, and the

overall duration of the group. Treasure Hunter, Integrator, and Energizer reported the length of their groups to be two hours. Compassionate Dream Worker emphasized a “strict time limit of two hours,” and Investigator observed that the group should be “no longer than two hours, because it’s emotionally wearing.” Sacred Space Dream Worker reported her group worked with dreams (one or two per session) for an hour and 15 minutes to an hour and a half with additional time for socializing. Treasure Hunter commented that she “was all about the dreams” and steered her two groups away from socializing. The combination group and class attended by Catalyst began with an hour of a teaching component, and concluded with two hours of the dream group.

Frequency and duration ranged from set periods of six or eight weeks of weekly meetings, which to Investigator “seemed all right,” to three weekly meetings a month for 10 years, which to Sacred Space Dream Worker gave “momentum and value.” Catalyst’s combination class and dream group met once a week for six weeks. Treasure Hunter reported one of her groups met every two to three weeks, and the other met every three to four weeks, with the next meeting time decided by the members at the end of the group session. Both are long-running groups, one of which has been meeting for the past 15 years. Compassionate Dream Worker’s group has been meeting once a month for five years, and Integrator’s group has met weekly for the past five years. Energizer describes her two groups that have been meeting once a month for two years as “very ongoing – unending.” Although the long-running groups were not closed per se, participants reported that many of the members had been in attendance since the inception of the groups.

Theme 2: Space

This theme can be defined as the psychological space built on the foundation of the structured procedure of the Ullman method of group dream work, and procedures specific to each group. Participants' comments indicated that this space is held in place by the group members' self-monitoring and/or the presence and leadership of group facilitator(s).

Subtheme 2.1: Safety, Comfort, and Warmth. Throughout all of the interviews all participants expressed feeling safe in an environment that offered confidentiality, emotional support, comfort, and warmth. Compassionate Dream Worker said that they locked the doors to their upstairs room, and were "secure at that point...symbolically." Energizer said that she pictured "fencing...around the backs of the chairs...whatever you share doesn't escape...if somebody gets up and leaves the group it does not follow them." She added, "It's just very comforting to have that structure and that space...held and enclosed for you." Treasure Hunter said that as the dreamer she had "all the power" as she could share as much or as little as she wanted, and could "respond or not respond." Integrator described it as a "supported environment of mutuality." Catalyst said that "because we asked questions *about* the dream, it was safe...never any fighting about it...always safe." He described his experience of group members assisting him with his dream as "warming." Speaking of the facilitators, Investigator said, "There's a great warmth with them...a real comfort level." Energizer described "a warmth that...embraces everyone." She said that when it gets emotional, or to the heart of an issue, "It's just safe – there's a safe place there for me to do it – like a support group...there's a level of respect...and safety...that's very comforting."

Subtheme 2.2: Respect. Inherent to the part of the structured protocol during which group members gave their own personal meaning to the dream was the quality of respect for the dreamer's ability to choose or make his or her own meaning of the dream. This respect took the forms of no judgment, no direct interpretation, and no advice giving. Treasure Hunter commented that "It's not 'your dream means thus and such.' It's not that at all, it's 'You know, Penny, if this were my dream it would be about...'" Sacred Space Dream Worker reported that in her all women's non-facilitated group they often made the gesture of putting the hand on the heart as a "reminder to 'Quit lecturing her!' if someone forgets to say, 'If it were *my* dream.'" In this way, she said it avoids the "projection of me on you, or what I think you should do based on what you dream." Compassionate Dream Worker reported that in his all male group, they used the term "If this were my dream, I would say 'this'... and that they "don't ever say 'This is what I think it means.'" Integrator commented that this part of the process required "a lot of integrity" and "a real discipline around each person saying, 'If it were my dream,'" and realizing that the interpretation is coming through our "own values lenses." Catalyst emphasized that "You don't say 'Oh, I think your dream means...,'" and Energizer said that personalizing input in this way "holds people in check and keeps them from stepping over that boundary of 'You know what you should do about your life – you should do 'blah, blah, blah.'" "

This quality of respect was also present in the respectful interactions among the group members. Sacred Space Dream Worker stated that as a group member, she was "part of a team effort... that there's a listening and a deference to other questions" as well as being "mindful of the appropriate way of asking questions." Compassionate Dream

Worker said that he did not have the feeling of anyone being critical, that “we’re very careful of what other people’s privacies are,” and “do not interrupt each other at all,” and that as a non-facilitated group, they “invite” members to comment but never “pin them down.” He added that he himself usually waited to respond to a dream until other members who had a need to respond quickly did so. Catalyst said of his group members, “There was no one judging or anything else...no kind of animosity or badness.” Of the facilitator he said, “She wasn’t pushy, she wasn’t forceful.” Integrator stated that there was “an honoring of the other,” and Energizer emphasized that it was “so necessary” to hold respect for the dreamer as it was “so personal - everybody lays themselves out there.”

Two participants expressed inner challenges with being non-judgmental. Investigator said that she was aware of her internal dialogue about a person, and her own judgmental thoughts about their comments (e.g., “That guy, he’s really way off”). Catalyst admitted, “You have to catch yourself sometimes – you don’t want to be judgmental – and it’s quite easy to do.”

Subtheme 2.3: Facilitator(s) role. All participants shared their experiences of the role the group facilitator(s) played in providing the space for the dream work to occur. Of the participants, Investigator and Integrator were in groups led by mental health professionals, Catalyst was in a combination class/group led by a teaching/mental health professional, and Treasure Hunter and Energizer acted as facilitators for their groups as well as being active group members. Sacred Space Dream Worker and Compassionate Dream Worker were in non-facilitated groups.

Per their role in maintaining the space in which the dream work occurred, Investigator said of the co-facilitators of her group, “They come from a space of compassion and understanding,” and “I trust them so much.” Speaking of the same facilitators (in a different group), Integrator described them as “...very gentle at guiding, and very good at holding energetic space,” adding that “you can hold energetic space and not have to say anything, but still be holding a space that is powerful.” Catalyst said of the facilitator of his combination class/group, “She wasn’t pushy. She wasn’t forceful. You’d be kind of stuck and she’d ask you a particular question and it would pull more information out of you and it would help.”

Speaking of her role as facilitator in one of her two groups, Treasure Hunter stated that she was more “cognizant of time,” and of “making sure that people were using the best phrasing – ‘If it were my dream...’ ” She reminded them that it’s “I, I, I!” if they slipped and said “you.” Energizer, who is also facilitator in her two dream groups, said she feels “a sense of leadership...monitoring the safety net, and the (*emotional*) depth.” She said she sees herself as “mother and weaver - mother to keep the structure of the group, and weaver to make sure that it’s all heard...to make sure that everyone has had a full opportunity to share, and that the dreamer has seen a full picture.” She added that she has been in this role long enough that she feels comfortable reminding group members that “You mean to say ‘for me’ – in your version this is what it means for you.”

Per the non-facilitated groups, Sacred Space Dream Worker reported that because people in her group (ongoing for past 10 years) were “comfortable through their professions or otherwise in...group process and human relationships...it’s a real easy thing to do...in a leaderless way.” Compassionate Dream Worker stated that his group

(ongoing for past five years) had learned about the process from a “guru in dreams” who gave a lecture at his church, and the group had “never had any disagreements about how we’re going about this process.”

Theme 3: Inner Activations

This theme includes the dreams, the emotions, thoughts, and body sensations that precede the outer verbal expressions from the dreamer or group members. Qualities of emotional activations include vulnerability and apprehension in sharing a dream. These are juxtaposed with passion, excitement, and enthusiasm - the latter three often experienced through physical sensation. Participants reported processing information on cognitive and intuitive levels, and experiencing inner activations at moments of insight. Outcome qualities included participants’ inner activations of empathy, sympathy, and altruism.

Subtheme 3.1: Emotions. Four participants reported feelings of vulnerability and apprehension as they prepared to share a dream with the group. Investigator described it as “a lot of vulnerability,” and said she feels “great nervousness because I know enough about dream work to know where they can go, and what they can mean.” Compassionate Dream Worker said he feels “some shyness about it, because it’s very personal,” and “a little apprehensive about sharing because it’s an intimate sharing.” Energizer stated, “When you lay a dream out on the table, you are open and trusting. You’re putting yourself out there, and feeling vulnerable.” She said of her own vulnerability, “By allowing myself to be vulnerable, it speaks to the heart of the other people in the dream group, and they embrace that vulnerability. They know that their turn...they’re going to have an opportunity to be vulnerable as well.”

Catalyst described it as “opening up every single part of you to a group of people sometimes you don’t know,” and “It’s pretty much laying out your soul in front of a group when you don’t even fully understand it yourself.” Also commenting on the soul, Energizer wrote in her artist statement, “We all agree to open ourselves up a little bit and allow our souls to be seen.”

Although Investigator called sharing a dream an “intimidating experience,” requiring great “courage to put it out there and let people dissect it,” she added that she was also “hopeful – especially if it’s a dream that’s confounded me.” She added that she is “always very excited to tell it.” Treasure Hunter reported a “sense of anticipation...always an intense feeling of curiosity.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said that she is always brought back to the physical emotion of the dream she is sharing. Energizer described physical sensations of “speeding up” in her body and in her speech that accompany the “level of excitement” that happened in her brain and that it was “exhilarating.” She noted that she started to “speed up” as she talked about it to the interviewer.

Four participants described their emotions as they listened to and worked with others’ dreams. Treasure Hunter said she feels “a sense of exploration and intense curiosity” as she tries to “make sense of the story unfolding in the dream.” Investigator experienced it as “very exciting, very exciting,” and Sacred Space Dream Worker said that this is “one of the neatest parts of dream group,” and that she had some of the same emotions as when she shared a dream. Energizer emphasized that she “*loves*” being a group member and “*loves*” listening to others’ dreams.

Subtheme 3.2: Information Processing. While telling her own dreams, Energizer described her brain “working on three different things at the same time.” She said that while on one level she was sharing the dream through verbal expression, there was another level of her brain that was “processing like a computer looking for analogies or connections – associations to my waking experience...and another level that’s scanning what I’m saying and looking for emotional statements.” Integrator stated that there was “something else going on other than just gathering information, and the mind sorting it to come out with the solution.” She described it as “some kind of energetic information coming,” and she waited “for things to sort and align in my brain.” She likened her mental experience to “...one of those Chinese puzzles...going from confusion to alignment.”

While listening to group members’ personal interpretations of her dream, Treasure Hunter said, “I’m aware of the other people in the group, but I’m really *in* the dream. I just try to *feel* the projection.” When working with group members’ dreams, she said that the more she listens, the better she is able to “feel” the dream and “even inhabit it.” Integrator stated that when group members are saying something to her, “I am centered in myself in those moments...I’m listening...to how does this feel?” She said that she knows “the truth in it by how it feels, either intuitively or in my belly.”

Subtheme 3.3: Moments of insight. Cognitive, emotional, and physical inner activations often accompanied the moment of an “Ah-ha!” insight, or discovery. When working with her own dreams, Treasure Hunter said that when “things start making sense,” she would “be very excited because ‘AH!’ that really makes a lot of sense.” Investigator admitted that when an emotional part came to her about her own dream, she

tried to “just be neutral with it...or save it for later.” Sacred Space Dream Worker described the “Ah-hah!” emotion as an “awareness and an uplifted ‘Oh, Wow!’” Integrator said, “If there’s an understanding that’s gleaned through dream work, I feel a part of my body relax that I didn’t even realize was tense.” She added, “If it’s something pertinent to the heart, it could be just that opening right around the chest and softening.” She continued, “The ‘Ah-ha!’ moment might be in my belly...it would be an ‘exhale’- a softening in the belly – of truth.” Catalyst said that it is “amazing the kind of feedback” he got from his own emotions, that “You don’t think you’re holding on to things, like when you lose loved ones...and all of a sudden you find yourself just crying in front of the group.”

When assisting group members with their dreams, Investigator reported experiencing a “tidal wave of energy” when she had an idea of what the dream may mean, and getting “so psyched up I can hardly sit in my chair.” Energizer reported a similar experience when something felt right to her or “an ‘Ah-hah’ clicks” for her: “I just get really excited...a light bulb goes off in my head and I sometimes can’t wait to speak. She added, “The energy boost is awesome!”

Subtheme 3.4: Empathy, Sympathy, and Altruism. Three participants described feelings of empathy, sympathy, and altruism for their fellow group members. Catalyst said that at times, “I was close to tears myself...to see someone really struggling...not realizing it was an issue until they let it out.” At other times he said he “kind of felt sorry for them,” and sometimes “felt sad.” He added, “I’d rather be there, and embrace them and help them through,” and that “you want to really get involved and you really want to help.” Compassionate Dream Worker said “I’m really glad we’re all

here... to help each other.” He said that when he listened to other’s dreams, it helped him to “understand where they are, and how they’re dealing with things.” He described his experience of being a group member as “sympathy...understanding...tolerance.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said that she feels “a grateful anticipation that everybody else has had dreams...and disappointment (*for them*) when not so.”

Theme 4: Connections

This theme includes the exchanging, giving, and receiving of ideas, emotions, and energies through the vehicle of the dream. These connections, fueled by the inner activations, are initiated by the outer expression of the dream, followed by the two rounds of questions and answers, and concluding with the sharing of insights and discoveries. The dreamer and group members experience their own unique resonances during this process of connection.

Subtheme 4.1: Outer Expressions: Telling and Listening to the Dream. In the role of dreamer, all participants reported the dual experience of telling their dreams out loud to the group, and listening to themselves as they did so. In the role of group member, all participants described their experience of listening to the dream.

When describing working with their own dreams, three participants used the word “love” (with accompanying voice emphasis) to describe the experience of telling their dreams to the group. Treasure Hunter said “I *love* telling my dreams out loud,” and that it is a “fun experience.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said, “I *love* telling my dreams out loud,” that sometimes it is as if she were hearing it for the first time herself. Energizer said, “I *love* being able to experience the dream just like everyone else in the group...as if it were a dream I had never heard.” Four participants reported increased clarity from this

process: Integrator said that “Re-telling the dream...clarifies the dream”; Energizer said that “Sharing the dream acts as a reflection so that I can hear it and get better clarity”; Sacred Space Dream Worker said “It’s though I’m hearing it for the first time myself”; and Catalyst reported that when he tells a dream, “...a million more details come out in my head...and it’s...‘Ah! I didn’t even see that.’ ” He shared that “It is a lot more poignant when you say it to others – not just writing it down.” He added that it is “amazing when you put it all out there...all of a sudden it comes out when you share it with a group.” He described it as “a nice release...you’re not holding on to it anymore...very cleansing as well.” Energizer described the experience of sharing a dream as “emotional,” that in one instance she “was overcome with emotions and couldn’t speak for a few minutes.”

When listening to group members’ dreams, Integrator said she is “gathering factual information about the dream from the dreamer.” Energizer said that she writes down “whatever they say that feels like it’s in bold...a whole plot line...or...just a word or...just a feeling.” She said that when she hears group member’s dreams, she gets “to see a glimpse of their authentic soul,” that what’s in “bold” is “who they really are...their authentic self, their spiritual soul self.” Investigator said that she writes the dream as she listens, thinking to herself, “I just have no idea what this means.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said that even though the group only works with one dream per session, all group members initially read a dream and that this “seems to lubricate the process.”

Subtheme 4.2: Question and Answer. After telling and listening to the dream, dreamer and group members interacted through the group members’ detail-oriented questions and then associative/emotional questions to which the dreamer responded. All

participants related their experiences of this phase both in working with their own dreams and working with other's dreams. The specific experiences of group members during this phase will be described in the subsequent theme of Transformations.

Sacred Space Dream Worker stated that "important and pivotal...is the question/answer phase of looking at the dream itself. Questions are where the 'ah-hahs' come from." Investigator described this as "a back and forth, question and answer, question and answer" and that "as you're answering you begin to get glimmers of what this dream might actually mean, before anybody's actually worked on it." She said that she is "always amazed" at what she discovers about associations during this part. Sacred Space Dream Worker spoke of her "openness of the receiving of questions from the group." She said that she is "eager to hear" and puts "a high value" on the questions because they will "help me clarify...or will help clarify something for them, which is also in turn helping me...to think of it in a slightly different way." Integrator said that answering the questions "clarifies the dream even further for me."

Catalyst said, "Everyone knew that it was wanting to understand it, and you asked leading questions to try to pull something out of them." He added that after the group session, "People would...thank you for asking certain questions and thank you for being there." Investigator said that during this phase she tends "to forget there are other people in the group," and wants to "bore in like a lawyer questioning his client."

Subtheme 4.3: Sharing Insights. Four participants described the specific manner in which they shared their insights during the "If it were my dream..." phase of the dream work process. Investigator said, "I start talking and it's almost like it's not me talking...this wisdom comes out of me that I don't know where it comes from."

Integrator said that often she will “simply say what comes to me – whether or not it appears to make linear sense,” and that other times she will say the words “If it were my dream,” pause, and wait until her answer comes. She added that she does not know if what she says is for the dreamer or for other group members, or for herself for “later reflection.” Compassionate Dream Worker said he tries to tie his comments into “something they had presented in going around, or related to something which is constant (*in their lives*).” He added that even group members who have been “doing this a long time will have a lot of ‘Ah-hahs!’ ” to share. Energizer said she uses the notes she has taken of the dreamer’s words or feelings that stood out in “bold” and then shares how those parts play into the dream for her. She added that because of her inner excitement, she becomes very “animated” and “just so active” during this process.

Subtheme 4.4: Resonances. All participants described experiencing differing degrees of connection and resonance in working with their own dreams and working with group members’ dreams.

In working with their own dreams, participants shared their reactions to group members’ personal interpretations of their own dream. Treasure Hunter said, “I’m focused on their projections...some of them resonate, and some of them don’t resonate.” Compassionate Dream Worker said, “I will remember things as people talk to me about what they think it might mean,” and that in one instance “two people made suggestions...that really fit in – ‘Oh, yeah!’ ” Investigator stated that at times she cannot relate at all to what group members say, and other times she will get “a visceral, whole body experience of response to an interpretation.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said that what is “really affirming” is seeing “all these smiles around the room.” Integrator said, “I

take what is of value. I know the truth in it by how it feels.” Energizer said, “Everybody throws out their own ideas...I can pick and choose which ones ring most true for me.”

Describing her responses to group members’ dreams, Sacred Space Dream Worker said, “Sometimes there’s really nothing coming up for me.” She described the difference in her degree of resonance to group members’ dreams by way of how she might word her personal response. She said, “If it were my dream, I would think I would pay some more attention to *this*, ” is much more a “generic statement than ‘Wow! If this were my dream, this is what I’m learning about.’ ” Catalyst said, “You hear something and you react to yourself as well,” and that in his group, “We get more interactive if it affects us and help us.” He said that there were times when “There’s not a lot I can think of to pick apart that dream,” that he would share what he thought, “but it would be quick and short.” He contrasted this with “...some of the ones, you’d be like ‘Wow!’ - really interested, especially ones if it had an effect on yourself.”

Subtheme 4.5: Flow. In her interview, Sacred Space Dream Worker described her group’s beginning and ending procedure of a “physical...connecting touch...representing the continuity of energy – giving energy and receiving energy around the circle.” She said that the nonverbal reminders her group members give to each other are a “nice flow of a way to engage each other.” The descriptions from participants’ artist statements described the overall essence of this theme of connection as a flow of giving and receiving. Treasure Hunter wrote of her drawing, “Information is flowing to and from the dreamer telling the dream and to and from everyone else in the group asking questions and responding.” Investigator wrote, “The real ‘action’ is in the flow of thoughts, ideas, and emotions among everyone in the group. It is invisible but it

is the ‘main’ thing that happens.” She added, “Dream work in a group is so ephemeral and free-flowing.” In her artist statement, Sacred Space Dream Worker wrote that the symbols in her artwork represented “giving and receiving insight and energy,” and “continuous path, connectedness, and community.” Compassionate Dream Worker wrote, “There is much specific communication resulting from our willingness to share and be together.” Integrator wrote, “We join together, our energies merge and flow.”

Theme 5: Transformations

The theme of Transformations includes the new qualities of the dream, the individual, and the group as a result of the process of group dream work.

Subtheme 5.1: Transformation of the Dream. As group members and dreamer make connections in the giving, receiving, and processing of information about the dream, the dream itself undergoes a creative transformation. Investigator said that while she listens to and writes down the dream it “is just a garbled mess,” that during “the questioning part, it always get more developed and more clear.” Treasure Hunter wrote in her artist statement, “There is...a process in which the dream initially starts out as meaningless images, eventually coalesces into some kind of coherent narrative to me.” Investigator used similar language: “When I get to the end, it’s going to start gelling and coalescing, and I’m going to start seeing things.” Treasure Hunter said that as she listens she looks at it as “a movie or a film or a story,” and asks, “What is the story in this dream? Who is the protagonist? What’s the action? What’s the dialogue?” She then tries to “feel what it feels like” and comes up with a story of what the dream says to her.

Four participants described their experience of collaborating on the creative transformation of the dream. Investigator said, “When everyone listens to a dream or

comments on one, there is a great melting pot of all the ideas that comes together.”

Treasure Hunter said of the process:

It’s like we’re all collaborating on a story. We’ve got the story line going, and we’ve got this background, and we’ve got these elements in it. And somebody says, “Oh...when I’m in that car, there’s something wrong with the steering wheel.” So then I’m immediately thinking, “Does that fit into the story that I’ve projected? No, not really,” so I don’t really say anything, and then somebody else might say, “Well, the road seems to be really bumpy,” and that fits with my story so I’ll kind of run with it.

Investigator described it thus:

It’s almost like somebody’s painting inside your brain – “I’m out in the country, and it’s all green, and there’s these great big trees with Spanish moss,” and as they say all these things this image is being developed in your head, which is fascinating. Then sometimes you have to erase some stuff (*laugh*), when they say, “It was a cloudy day,” and you had the sun there (*laugh*)...so that’s kind of fun.

She said that at the end, “We all sort of start to get more of the same image.” Catalyst described the collaboration in his group:

We’d come up with a name for the dream, and then we’d come up with a quick description...it was like a film title. Then we’d go through the timings, the present, and go through all the different kind of things and emotions, and once we got through the main characters and what was there, we’d pull the different aspects of the different areas.

Integrator likened this story process of working with others' dreams to "going into a forest as if it were a fairytale and seeing all kinds of animals that you didn't know existed."

Implicit in the group dream work protocol of each group member saying "If this were my dream..." is the transformation of the initial dream into as many interpretations and unique meanings as there are group members. Sacred Space Dream Worker wrote of a group dream work experience working "LK's dream" that was "particularly powerful for all of us." She wrote that in contrast to LK's fearful feelings about the dream, she feels "anchored by the overwhelming enormity and beauty of the mountains. It reinforces the notion of the grand spirit, of something greater than myself."

Five participants described instances of transformation of perceived negative or neutral content of their own and others' dreams to a positive and helpful meaning. Investigator said, "Our dreams seem so nonsensical and muddled. There's a sense that they really don't mean anything at all- at first when you go in." She described the experience of finding that "This dream really is something wonderful, something very soft and supportive and helpful – it wasn't at all a sort of negative bad little dream." Catalyst said, "...when everybody else comes back...everything changes." Integrator described a dream she worked the night before the interview "that started with grief...a sense of sadness or regret – a regret at the heart – and ended with a sense of extreme joy and love." Sacred Space Dream Worker said that she found all of the dream work process helpful and did not hesitate to look at or share "even the most terrifying nightmare" with the dream group. Treasure Hunter said of a negative content health-

related dream: “My dream didn’t come to torture me to say, ‘You got this problem kid, you’re doomed’...I got a diagnosis, I got a prognosis, and I got a surgeon.”

Subtheme 5.2: Transformation of the Individual. Five participants described the changes they noticed in themselves and group members as a result of participating in the group dream work process. Treasure Hunter said of herself: “...I’m a pretty gnarly person most of the time. I’m very opinionated and ‘blah, blah, blah,’ but I’ve seen myself willing to listen to ideas that, before I started dream work, I would have discounted.” She said of a group member: “I’ve watched her become...more comfortable in her own skin – as a woman artist of a certain age...and I think a *lot* of that has to do with her work in the dream group.” Investigator described the “relief and transcendence” on group members’ faces upon realizing the positive vs. perceived negative meaning of their dreams. She said of herself: “I’m always profoundly moved by people’s dreams and the possible meaning in them, and I never come out of dream group the same person I went in.” Integrator said of working with her own dreams, “If I’m going to go through all of that work, I’m going to make sure it transforms my life!” Of working with others’ dreams she said, “I’m a richer person afterwards.” Energizer said of herself: “I leave dream group feeling refreshed, vibrant, truer, and more colorful for having had the experience.” She wrote in her artist statement: “We peel off and shed the top protective layer of ourselves. What is left is an under layer – a vibrant new, colorful, powerful expression of ourselves.” Catalyst described the effect that his emotional release had on members of his group: “When my full dream came out everyone realized, ‘Wow! This is pretty powerful.’ So then all these big powerful dreams came out.”

Subtheme 5.3: Transformation of the group. All participants shared the outcomes that the process of group dream work had on the group process, dynamics, and relationships.

Six participants described qualities they attributed to long-running groups including recognizing dream themes and patterns, synchronicities, trust, acceptance, and stability. Treasure Hunter said of recognizing “patterns in...people’s dreams”: “If you’re in a dream group long enough, you learn – well, this person always seems to have dreams about architecture...or about her country of origin, or...about babies.” Compassionate Dream Worker said, “members...dream the same kind of patterns.” He gave the example of one member who reported dreams with “huge buildings with great halls and big rooms” so often that group members commented on the absence of these symbols when they did not appear in the reported dream. He said that because of remembering others’ dreams from previous sessions, group members feel free to reference them with current dreams. Energizer said that she remembers symbols from previous dreams of group members, so she gets “to know their dream personality.”

Per synchronicities, Investigator said, “You start to dream on top of each other, and sharing symbols in your dreams, so there’s this real connectivity.” Energizer said the “synchronicities” that show up for her in dream group are “pretty powerful.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said that there is a “high trust level” because they are “an established group.” Energizer said she has been “with a group for a while so there is trust.” Integrator said she experiences a “richness that comes from being with the same group for multiple years,” and wrote in her artist statement, “Repeated constituting of the same group generates stability in the structure.” She said that her own group has been

together for “a long time, so we know each other’s ‘holes’ ...there is a sense of honoring...without expecting the other to be whole or perfect.”

Five participants commented on the unique nature and emotional closeness of dream group relationships. Integrator said of not expecting others to be perfect, “There’s not many places you experience that.” Catalyst said, “Everyone was safe, and I can imagine that doesn’t always happen.” Integrator said, “Because of the intimacy that comes up in dream work, you have someone that feels very close to you even though they’re quite different from you.” Compassionate Dream Worker said, “We are all...good friends but we’re not buddies in the sense that we go out together.” Sacred Space Dream Worker said that members of her group “hold the dream community relationship in a ...special, different place – that can coexist with whatever other kind of relationship.” Energizer said she feels a “life connection...a past and former life connection to these people...that you just don’t get from other walks of life...that is rare to find in other places.”

Catalyst said of he and his classmates, “While I was in that dream group was probably the closest we were all to get as a group...in that moment we really came together...just sharing...nobody was holding back...it made a huge difference.”

Energizer said of her groups, “Our relationships have developed so deeply that none of us wants to stop hearing other people’s dreams and sharing each other’s thoughts.”

Theme 6: Integrations

The Integrations theme includes the outcomes of experiencing group dream work for the participants while in the dream group and ongoing outcomes in life outside the dream work group.

Subtheme 6.1: Benefits of Group Dream Work Process. All participants described the advantages they experienced when working with their own dreams in the group vs. working with their dreams on their own, and the value they experienced from working with group member's dreams.

Treasure Hunter said at times she feels "stymied" in trying to unravel a dream, thinking it "makes no sense," yet when the group starts "unpacking it... 'bing, bing, bing,' things start making sense." Investigator said that "gaining that wisdom... is immeasurably helpful" in her life. She said, "They have a clarity of distance... six to eight people weighing in on this... who have detachment and neutrality that you just can't get any other way... that's vital." She said that it is a "perspective that's hard to have on your own," and likens it to "cutting your own hair, there's just places you can't reach." Sacred Space Dream Worker said, "The dreamer is uniquely blind to his or her own dreams," and that she gets "value doing this discussion in a group... that I couldn't if I was just reflecting on my own dream in the privacy of my own space... so it's just invaluable." Compassionate Dream Worker laughed as he said, "Other people coming up with obvious conclusions... I'm not a dumb person, and I'm thinking, 'Now why didn't I see that a long time ago on this journey?' " Integrator commented that she has "experienced insights, facilitated by other dreamers... much deeper than... working a dream on my own." Catalyst admitted, "People can always capture from what you say more about yourself than you think you know." Energizer said that the "full spectrum of interpretation" is important to her, and she can get that from a group, whereas it is hard for her to get from one-on-one dream work.

Whether working with one's own dream or a group member's dream, Treasure Hunter called it a "win-win situation," that "regardless of whatever the dreamer gets from the dream work, whatever someone projects on another person's dream, they get to further their understanding of who they are, and what this dream might be telling them about their lives, or about their journey, or their paths." Investigator said that she could apply what others are learning from their dreams to her own life when in a similar situation. Sacred Space Dream Worker said that a surprising and unanticipated benefit is the "amount of 'Ah-hahs!' from somebody else's dream," and that the " 'Ah-hah!' is about me...not about them." Compassionate Dream Worker said that it is "really, really helpful" to him to listen to group member's dreams and to understand "how they connect to their life and their problems as well as their successes – their living of life." Integrator said she gets "value out of just about every dream another dreamer tells." She wrote in her artist statement, "We each benefit from participation, regardless of the dreamer. Each is blessed, each gives." Catalyst said that learning from other's dreams "helped me realize things about my life or about my dreams." Energizer spoke of coming to the group with her own dream and expectations of what she will get, and then ending up "getting something valuable from somebody else's dream..."

Subtheme 6.2: Relationships. Sacred Space Dream Worker said that because of "doing this work with all these women for all these years...we've sustained deeper and longer relationships..." outside of the dream group. Energizer said that she takes from dream group "the personal relationships...very, very valuable." She compared these friendships to family relationships because of sharing on "that deep, deep level," and "because they're spiritual in nature...connected to our inner connectedness." She added

that she now has “a huge assortment of friends...from different walks of life...different cultures...different ages...different *everything*.” Catalyst said there were “lasting friendships formed” in his dream group, with a “connection that will stay close for the rest of your life.” He added that as he looks back he realizes that since the class members are no longer in the dream group, and no longer sharing emotions, that the “energy’s changed...’cause we’ve forgotten about the emotional content...and we’ve kind of drifted.”

Subtheme 6.3: Integration of Significant Dream Work Experiences.

Investigator told of an insight she had a year after a dream: “That’s what that dream meant...I saw how we’re given information about our future. I find that incredible.”

Treasure Hunter told of a series of dreams that gave her accurate information and guidance on a serious medical issue, and which she shared with her medical practitioners. Sacred Space Dream Worker said that based on a dream she shared “in the premonition dream category...around health issues,” she followed up on a “medical hunch that turned out to be a really important thing to have done...a pretty dramatic example.” Energizer also followed the guidance of a dream to decide on a medical treatment.

Treasure Hunter wrote of a significant group dream work experience in which she shared “a very emotional dream” related to the recent death of her sister. She wrote, “By talking about and hearing projections from the group about the images in the dream, I was able to feel considerably more at peace with my sister’s death...it helped assuage any lingering guilt...I felt more clarity...and deep emotional impact.”

Investigator wrote of a group dream work experience in which the dreamer shared a dream that had “a deeply mystical quality” and seemed to be “an epic dream...of great

meaning.” A few months later, she learned that the dreamer had died, and the dream now seemed clearly to have symbolized his own impending death. A fellow student integrated this dream work experience by making a “large stone remembrance” with a symbol and words from the dream to be put in the school garden at the class graduation. Sacred Space Dream Worker told of her “homework” in integrating a dream about her recently deceased mother. The group members suggested, “Why don’t you pick up that dialogue? What would you have wanted to say to your mother?”

Subtheme 6.4: Individual outcomes. All participants described the outcomes of participating in group dream work - personal insights, the impact on their waking lives, new personal qualities - and what stood out for them as most beneficial in the process.

Compassionate Dream Worker said of the resolution of a longtime recurring nightmare: “That dream has penetrated my life, and when it stopped, I realized how important dreams are.” He said that he has come to know that a “dream is not random...it really is related to your experiences and who you are.” Catalyst commented that he liked to think he was not one to “hold things in.” He laughed as he told of his surprise realization of “Oh! I didn’t realize I was holding on to that!” after an emotional “release” upon sharing a dream. Energizer told of a life-changing realization - that working with her dreams was a way of figuring out her own wants and listening to her own voice by looking at all the different perspectives the dreams presented. Catalyst realized:

My dreams are *me* - trying to tell me something worrisome from the past or something now, or something I need to do, or something deep inside I believe.

We know all the answers. There’s just so much clouding it, we don’t listen to

what we're doing. Dreams help me tune to myself...like, 'Ah! OK. You're trying to tell me something!'

Speaking of her waking life, Integrator said, "The images have an impact in my personal and professional decisions, on my relationships." She said that having skills and information on working with dreams is "just real helpful in daily life," and not having them "would be like not having one of my senses." She described a dream that is "still very alive" for her, giving her a sense of "courage and instinctual knowing." Energizer said that getting down into the different layers of meaning of a dream allows her to "see all the different layers that your waking life has in meaning as well." Sacred Space Dream Worker said that her experience of group dream work has given her "a self-awareness, and choosing to pay attention to those things...beyond the session...life choices." Catalyst said that although the group dream work did not change the way he did things, he and his partner now share their dreams and this sharing has brought them closer.

Integrator said that group dream work has been part of her process of "desensitizing myself to my own stuff – becoming less self-conscious...both emotionally and spiritually." Compassionate Dream Worker and Catalyst both said that the group dream work has helped them be more in touch with and realize more about themselves and their dreams. Sacred Space Dream Worker said that there is "a mindfulness quality...the dream work brings to me...an awareness of listening and paying attention." She added that it allows her a "transcending of the here and now level of thinking" of busy daily life tasks. Energizer said she gained "a great appreciation for the human

experience and for the commonalities that people share.” Treasure Hunter described the most beneficial outcome for her:

...to get closer to recognizing that everybody has their own perceptions...that we’re ten people standing around looking at a painting, and ten people see a different story...That’s just really valuable to me, because...I tend to be a little rigid (*tap, tap, tap sound*) –‘My view’s the best one.’ So it’s a reminder that we all have our own perspectives.

Catalyst said that what stands out for him is “Definitely the bits where the emotion for me– whether from my own dream or somebody else’s. I remember crying, I remember laughing.” Compassionate Dream Worker said that he enjoys and appreciates “the friendship kinds of things that come when people share with each other and come to solutions or feel that they’ve been helped in their life.” Energizer said that she feels “validated” every time “we can unravel the meaning of a dream,” that “it’s...an affirmation of ‘*Yes (her name)*, this is true. *Yes*, this stuff is real.” She said that it has become a “calling” for her because she “can’t get enough of helping people make that connection for themselves.”

Subtheme 6.5: Vision and Potential. Through their participating in and experiencing of group dream work, four participants described insights that led to visions for the potential of group dream work from the personal to the global level. Energizer realized that “This is what I’m supposed to do!” She said she has received the “drive and validation...to continue this into a career,” and the “self-confidence” to hopefully make a difference with it. Compassionate Dream Worker said he sees therapeutic uses for lucid dreaming. Treasure Hunter said she believes that “so many things that people are afraid

of in themselves and others – could be worked through and resolved” through group dream work, that it can help “facilitate better self-understanding and better other-understanding.” She added that it has “profound” potential “to help people understand that we’re one species,” and “to bring world peace.” Energizer expressed a wish that “it were more prevalent in our society,” and expressed her own intentions to do her part in making it so. Integrator described group dream work as “Akin to the knights of the round table – coming together for truth/wholeness/freedom.”

Summary

To summarize how participants experienced the process and outcomes of group dream work through the framework of the six major themes, one can put them in a nested sequence as follows: The *Parameters* provided a physical and non-physical setting in which a *Space* was created within which the process of group dream work could occur. This process began with the *Inner Activations* of group members, and continued with the flow of the *Connections* process. These processes led to *Transformations*, which bridged the experiences of process to outcomes. Finally, *Integrations* occurred as intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes within the group and as specific outcomes in life outside the dream group.

Participants’ Overall Experience of the Process

The participants’ artist statements contained metaphorically descriptive statements describing the essence of participants’ experiences of group dream work. Their verbal reflections described the images from their creative response artwork, which they created to illustrate their overall experience of group dream work. The following table contains graphics of the artworks and essential statements from the artist statements.

Table 10

Participants' Creative Response Artworks and Essential Statements




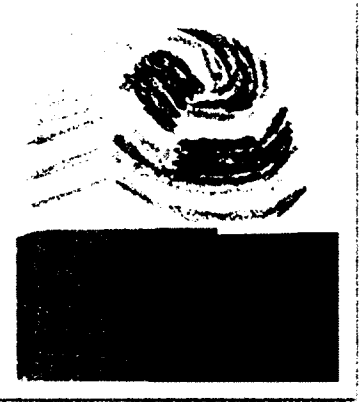

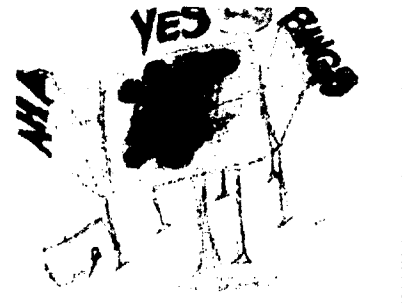
	<p>Participant #1: Treasure Hunter</p> <p>Information is flowing to and from the dreamer telling the dream and to and from everyone else in the group asking questions and responding.</p>
	<p>Participant #2: Investigator</p> <p>The real action is in the flow of thoughts, ideas, and emotions among everyone in the group. It is invisible but it is the "main" thing that happens.</p>
	<p>Participant #3: Sacred Space Dream Worker</p> <p>A circle...can represent the feminine spirit or force, and a sacred space. For me, the experience of...dream work has certainly been a sacred space.</p>

Table 10 (continued)

Participants' Creative Response Artworks and Essential Statements

	<p>Participant #4: Compassionate Dream Worker</p> <p>Like a squall, this gathering is unpredictable except that it contains the communal psychology of being a "human" being. It is the "stuff" from which dreams come.</p>
	<p>Participant #5: Integrator</p> <p>The group energy, attending to the dream, is greater than the sum of our energies. Akin to the knights of the round table, coming together for truth/wholeness/freedom.</p>
	<p>Participant #7: Energizer</p> <p>Something magical happens when people begin to tell a dream-that mask comes off and they lay authentic parts of themselves out on the table for everyone to see and interact with.</p>

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings from this study that answer the central research question, “What are participants’ experiences of the process and outcome of group dream work?” The chapter began with a brief overview of the data collection and analysis procedures. The first section of data presentation began with a demographic overview and a group profile of the seven participants in narrative and table form. The next section included an individual analysis of each of the seven participants, starting with a table of themes, subthemes, and brief verbatim quotes. Following each table was a narrative portrait that described each participant’s experience in rich detail, in their own “voices,” through the use of more extensive verbatim quotes. Each individual analysis concluded with a graphic of the participant’s creative response artwork.

The concluding section of data presentation began with a list in table form of the six major themes and related subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the triangulated data sources from the seven participants. This was followed by a detailed narrative describing in detail the six major themes and related subthemes from an analysis of the composite data, and followed by a final composite table of participants’ creative response artworks with selected quotes from their artist statements.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

After stating the purpose of this study and giving a brief explanation of the heuristic design methodology (Moustakas, 1990), I will give a brief overview of its use in this study, and follow with a brief summary of the major findings. True to the crucial last phase of heuristic inquiry, I will present a creative synthesis of the data in which each participant contributes his or her unique voice in answer to the central research question. Following this synthesis will be a comparison of the findings with the existing literature, and a discussion of the implications for counselors, for clients, and for counselor education. I will then offer suggestions for future research indicated by the findings, discuss possible limitations of the study, and lastly, give my personal reflections.

Overview of Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to answer the central research question of “What are participants’ experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work?” The three subquestions were:

- What are participants’ experiences of working with their own dreams?
- What are participants’ experiences working with group members’ dreams?
- What are participants’ experiences of the group leader or facilitator (if there is one)?

To answer these questions I used Moustakas’ method of heuristic inquiry (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). The focus of a heuristic design is in fully and vividly recreating the lived experiences of participants of a phenomenon from

their own frames of reference. In this model, the researcher nurtures a sense of connectedness and relationship with the studied phenomenon. Before beginning the collection of data, I immersed myself in the topic of group dream work by participating in a weekend dream group retreat, attending an Expressive Arts Institute (Dreams, Art, and Nature), participating in a weekly women's dream group, attending two weekend dream group workshops, and attending lectures on dream work. From the contacts I made at these events and groups, and from posting a notice on the IASD (International Association for the Study of Dreams), I recruited seven participants using criterion and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002).

I conducted and audio-taped face to face individual interviews (in person or through Skype video call) with all seven participants (45-60 minutes), and collected journal entries, creative art responses, and reflective artist statements from six of the seven participants. Following heuristic design (Moustakas, 1990), I immersed myself in the collective data of each participant, one at a time. I then composed an individual depiction, identified themes and subthemes, constructed a case display analysis table and wrote a narrative portrait using verbatim quotes to illuminate the subthemes from each participant. Taking all of the individual data, I identified the common themes and subthemes and constructed a case display of the composite themes and followed with a narrative description of each theme and related subthemes. Four research team members gave input on themes and subthemes throughout the process by reviewing the collective data for each participant and giving final reflections on the final themes and subthemes.

Findings

Results of this study indicate that through participating in the process of group dream work, participants experienced beneficial outcomes whether they were engaged in the process as a “dreamer” or person sharing a dream, or as a group member assisting others to find meaning in their dreams. They experienced the facilitator(s), if there were any, as providing a psychologically safe space by holding the structure and boundaries of the process. In groups with no formal facilitator(s), group members themselves held the boundaries by following the structured protocol. Participants described benefits from experiencing the immediate process within the group as well as beneficial outcomes in their lives outside of the group.

The six major themes (Parameters, Space, Inner Activations, Connections, Transformations, and Integrations) that emerged from the triangulated data sources provide a framework for participants’ descriptions of their experiences of the process of group dream work and for the immediate and extended outcomes. Parameters, the organizational structure of the group, had an effect on how participants experienced the process in relation to the physical space, the time elements, and the number of people in the group. Qualities of safety, comfort, warmth, respect, and trust permeated participants’ experience of the psychological Space. The actual dream work process began from the Inner Activations of the participants, starting with the ultimate inner phenomena of dreams, and continuing with emotions, thoughts, cognitive and intuitive information processing, and physical sensations. Group members made Connections by the exchanging, giving, and receiving of ideas, emotions, and energies through the vehicle of the dream. Participants experienced outcomes of Transformations of their

dreams, of themselves as individuals, and as part of the transformation of the group.

Integrations of beneficial outcomes occurred in a variety of areas. These included “life choices,” personal relationships, professional issues, financial matters, and medical and health-related decisions.

Heuristic Inquiry and Creative Synthesis

In phenomenology, the uniqueness of the individual participants are distilled into a description of the essence of the phenomenon while in heuristic inquiry the participants retain their unique identities even as the researcher portrays them in a final creative synthesis of the data as a whole (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). The following synthesis contributes to answering the foundational question of heuristic inquiry, “What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?” (Patton, 2002, p.107). In this creative synthesis of the data I will present a “dream” that I myself “experienced,” and then allow each participant to respond to my “dream” in her or his own voice.

This is my dream: In this dream my name is Researcher. I am sitting in a circle with about six to eight other people, really different from me. It seems like I know them very well, although I know I don’t usually go out or socialize with them or anything. We are in a really familiar place, like we’ve been there many times before, and I feel very safe and comfortable. We’re doing some kind of thing where we are “giving and receiving energy around the circle.” Then one person starts telling a dream to all of us as if it were happening to him right now instead of in his sleep. We are all listening and some people are writing and taking notes.

Next, we start to ask him questions about the dream, first of all about the factual details, like “What color was the car? And “Was it day or night?” Then we ask questions about what associations he has with the images in the dream, and then we ask what emotions he was feeling in the dream, and even about what had been happening in his life around the time of the dream. I look around and one person is really fidgety like she can’t sit still in her chair and another one’s face looks so bright it’s like a light bulb must be turning on inside her head. Then each person in the circle says something so we all can hear it and it sounds like they all start with the words “If this were my dream...” but I can’t make out what exactly what each person is saying. The person who had told the dream is just sitting there and listening and doesn’t say anything until everybody else is finished talking. Then he talks about what rings true for him and he even says someone is “way off.” I don’t hear anybody say this but I see the image and hear the sound of the word “Ah-hah!” over everyone’s head like in a thought bubble, like they just thought of something they would never have expected. So, now I start knowing I am dreaming - I am experiencing lucid dreaming. So, while still in the dream I ask all the people in the circle what they think of my dream. Here is what they say:

My name is Treasure Hunter. If I were having this dream, first of all, I would be thinking that what I’m experiencing is “very compelling, and it’s very engrossing, and it’s very, very fun. There is nothing else that I do in my life that is like this.” Then I would say, ‘For me, this experience would be like going into a used bookstore, or going into a thrift store. It’s the same sense of anticipation and treasure hunting. You have no idea what you’re going to find.’

My name is Investigator. If this were my dream, I would feel like I was in 'live theater, because you don't know what's going to happen,' or like I was walking on 'a road in a mist, and you keep walking down it, and you don't know where you'll end up.' I would be thinking, 'It's profound in a way that many things are not – even other profound things.'

My name is Sacred Space Dream Worker. If this were my dream, it would be about 'interested folks coming together to be willing to participate in a community that's agreed to pay attention to dreams and what they may be able to provide to each of us, either for our own personal enrichment and for that of the group.' In this dream, 'I feel like this is a sacred time and a special place.'

My name is Compassionate Dream Worker. If this were my dream, it would mean that I was part of 'a group of agreeable people, like-minded people who all want to be doing dream work.' I would be enjoying 'the friendship kinds of things that come when people share with each other and come to solutions or feel they've been helped in life.'

My name is Integrator. If this were my dream it would be like I was 'heading out on an adventure – heading out into a mysterious jungle,' where 'you don't know what you're going to discover – regardless it's going to be good.' I feel 'in my belly' that 'it's deep work,' and that 'it's very rich, it's very rewarding.'

My name is Catalyst. If this were my dream, it would be a film about 'a group of us getting together, obviously describing our dreams, and trying to –one, work

them out, and two- be very open.’ In my dream, we are ‘describing dreams and all the emotions around them...and exploring things going on in your life at the time, and what you believe certain things mean to you.’

My name is Energizer. For me, this dream means I am in a place with ‘an opportunity...to share a dream with a group of fellow dreamers, and then we all get...a chance to play with the dream to try find the symbols and to find their meaning for us.’ I would be thinking, ‘It’s just a big brainstorm where *you* share a dream and then we all just play with it to see if we can uncover what it might mean for you.’ In my dream, this experience is ‘so empowering’ and ‘exhilarating!’

Comparison to Existing Literature

In looking back over the reviewed literature in light of the findings from this qualitative study, several of the findings of my study on the outcomes of group dream work paralleled and corroborated the findings of the reviewed research studies, case studies, and conceptual articles on individual and group dream work. The following narrative compares and contrasts the relevant themes and subthemes with the literature.

Parameters. The first major theme includes the preliminary factors set in place that provide the necessary structure and focus for the dream work group. Comparisons and contrasts to the literature include the subthemes of time elements, physical setting, and number of people in the group. As in the empirical literature on group dream work (Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Coholic & Breton, 2007; Falk & Hill, 1995; Kautner, 2005; Kolchakian & Hill, 2002; Sarlin, 1991; Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1995), participants in my study reported the number of people in the various groups averaged from six to ten. Very

different from the afore-referenced reviewed empirical literature on group dream work was that all of the reviews were from groups formed and run specifically as part of a planned research or case study. The groups for the most part were composed of homogenous and specific populations, such as nurses (Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004), medical interns (Sarlin, 1991), university classes (Freeman & Vogel, 2005), women in the process of divorce or separation (Falk & Hill, 1995), older people (Kautner, 2005), women affiliated with a community agency in the area of substance abuse (Coholic & Breton, 2007), heterosexual dating couples (Kolchakian & Hill, 2002), and university students (Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1995; Shuttleworth-Jordan et al. 1988). These groups took place in the corresponding physical settings.

All groups in the reviewed studies were time-limited from six weeks up to one semester, and all were led by counseling or academic professionals or trained facilitators. Results from each study came from data from all group members in that particular group. In contrast, the seven participants in my study came from different professions; each came from a different group (two of them participated in two separate groups). All except one participated in the dream groups solely for their own personal interest and growth. The exception was Catalyst who attended the group as part of a class requirement for a health related curriculum. Further contrasting with the literature, participants in this study met in a variety of physical settings with a time range duration of six weeks time-limited to 15 years ongoing.

Space. The second major theme can be described as the psychological space built on the foundation of the structured procedure of the Ullman method of group dream

work, and procedures specific to each group. Comparisons to the literature include the subthemes of Safety, Respect, and the Role of the Facilitator.

Of paramount importance in the Ullman model (1994; 2006) are the Safety and Discovery factors, keeping the dreamer in control of what to disclose or accept, thus allowing an atmosphere of safe exploration and discovery. Throughout all of the interviews in my study, participants emphasized feeling safe in an environment that offered confidentiality, emotional support, comfort, and warmth. They attributed this to the structured protocol of the group and to the facilitators who held the structure in place. “Because we asked questions *about* the dream, it was safe...never any fighting about it...always safe.” (*Catalyst*) This quote corroborates the findings of Toombs and Toombs (1985), that as opposed to the confrontation common in group therapy, most of the interpersonal interaction in a dream work group focuses on the dream content and is geared towards problem-solving, not the intrapersonal processes or the interpersonal interactions among group members, thus fostering a sense of safety and security.

Ullman’s (1994, 2006) emphasis on the Safety factor included the dreamer’s status as the ultimate expert in interpreting the meaning of the dream. Ullman originally developed the method to be in a teaching rather than a therapeutic setting, so that students could share their dreams and learn techniques experientially in a psychologically safe environment. Participants in my study experienced this part of the structure and protocol as a quality of respect, both as receivers of respect in the role of dreamer and givers of respect in the role of group member. This respect took the forms of no judgment, no direct interpretation, and no advice giving. All of the participants commented on the importance to them of the “If this were my dream...” part of the dream work structure.

In Ullman's experiential dream group (Ullman, 1990), the leader served not as a therapist, but to insure the group followed the process, and had the option of sharing a dream as a group member. Two participants in my study came from two separate dream work groups, both facilitated by the same two licensed mental health professionals who, as in the Ullman group, served as guides and keepers of the structure and protocol rather than counselors or therapists. Participants described these facilitators' roles as "paying close attention," being "very gentle at guiding...holding energetic space," and "letting everyone...offer dream insights." As in Ullman's original experiential dream group method, which he developed to be in a teaching rather than a therapeutic setting, one participant's group was a combination class and group as part of an academic curriculum for health professionals, and facilitated by an academic and mental health professional.

Berube (1999) challenged the two myths that prevented people from enjoying the benefits of dream work by citing Ullman's premises that it is not only specially trained professionals that can properly work with dreams, and that non-professionals can engage in dream work with beneficial results. In my study, two participants, neither of whom are mental health professionals, serve in dual roles of facilitators and active group members for two long-running dream groups each. Thus, they follow Ullman's original group method of the leader as non-authority and sharing his or her own dreams as part of the group, as well as insuring the group follows the protocol. One describes her role as facilitator as being "cognizant of time...and making sure that people are using the best phrasing ('If it were my dream.')" Another describes her facilitative role as being "mother to keep the structure of the group...and to monitor the safety net," and as "weaver...to make sure it's all heard."

Giving further credence to Ullman's premises, two participants in long-running groups meet without a facilitator, using knowledge they gained from attending a lecture and workshop given at their church. They say of their non-facilitated groups that "It's a real easy thing to do...in a leaderless way," and "We've never had any disagreements about how we're going about this process."

Inner Activations. The third major theme includes the dreams, the emotions, thoughts, and body sensations experienced by participants as they work with their own and group members' dreams. Comparisons to the literature include the subthemes of Moments of Insight, and Empathy, Sympathy, and Altruism.

Hill, Knox, Hess, Crook-Lyon, Goates-Jones, and Sim (2004) defined insight as meaning any variation of an "ahah" experience, in which the client expressed a new perception of self or the world. Participants' responses in my study describe a variety of cognitive, emotional, and physical inner activations at the moment of an "Ah-ha!" insight, or discovery, both with their own dreams and group members' dreams.

Toombs and Toombs (1985) reported that the sharing of a dream constructed complex personal interactions among the group members, which in turn promoted deep empathy, respect, and trust. Wolk (1996) wrote that the dreamer/psychodrama protagonist reported a high level of empathic support and understanding from the group members and the workshop leaders. Kautner (2005) reported that dreamers were surprised to experience a high degree of perceptiveness, sensitivity, and caring from the co-dreamers, whom they had not previously met or known. Deslauriers (2000) wrote that group dream work promoted qualities such as authenticity, openness, compassion, and truthfulness. He emphasized emotional literacy (being able to recognize and talk about

feelings) and empathy as qualities of emotional intelligence fostered by group dream work.

Responses from participants in my study describing feelings of empathy, sympathy, and altruism for their fellow group members corroborate these findings (e.g. “close to tears myself,” “sympathy, understanding, tolerance,” “embrace them and help them”). It is notable that the majority of responses pertaining to empathy, caring, and understanding came from the two male participants in the study. Related to this issue of male participation and investment in the process, (Kautner, 2005) reported that the two male participants who originally expressed skepticism about the use of talking about their own or others’ dreams, shared their dreams and responded with positive feedback about the process.

Connections. The fourth major theme includes the exchanging, giving, and receiving of ideas, emotions, and energies through the vehicle of the dream. Comparisons to the literature include the subtheme of Question and Answer, and Resonance. Hill et al. (2006) found that clients received more insight into their dreams from the exploration stage than the actual insight stage. The authors concluded that spending more time in the exploration stage (e.g., description, re-experiencing, associations, waking life triggers) would be more beneficial to clients than going quickly to the insight stage or than interpreting the dream for the client. Responses from participants in my study indicating the high value they placed on the question and answer phase of the dream work process support these conclusions. They reported, “Questions are where the ‘ah-hahs’ come from,” and “The questioning part – that’s when you begin to start pulling threads

together, and that's when you start to see what this chaotic jumble of images actually might mean."

In Kautner's (2005) study of an Ullman dream group with older people, the dreamers gladly accepted the co-dreamers' (*group members*) feedback (in the form of interpreting the dream as their own) as having value when they could relate it to their lives and past experiences. When the feedback did not seem relevant, the dreamers assigned it to being relevant to the co-dreamers' lives and past experiences. Participants in my study described their own experiences in the role of dreamer of the resonance or non-resonance of the feedback from group members. They commented that "...some of them (*projections*) resonate, and some of them don't resonate," that they "take what is of value," and "can pick and choose which ones ring most true for me."

Transformations. The fifth major theme includes the new qualities of the dream, the individual, and the group as a result of the process of group dream work. Comparisons to the literature include the subthemes of Transformation of the Dream, and Transformation of the Group. Toombs and Toombs (1985) acknowledged that although an individual's dream was initially an inherently personal and private event, once it was shared it became both public and social creation. Stefanakis (1995) described the process of sharing dreams as essentially a social interaction and that dreamers and therapists (or whomever the dream was shared with) constructed the meaning of the dream through language and social discourse. Participants in my study gave descriptions in rich detail of their interactions with group members as they constructed and re-constructed the initial shared dream. They described a creative and collaborative process ("It's like we're all collaborating on a story," and "there is a great melting pot of all the ideas that comes

together.”) through which the dream was refined in detail and associations for the dreamer, and then given as many unique meanings as there were group members.

The results of Kautner’s (2005) study indicated that combining people with different personalities in dream groups positively affected dream sharing and had the potential to create connections among diverse populations. Several participants in my study commented on this unique feature of their dream groups; although the groups were composed of people very different from each other, people developed emotionally close and even spiritual relationships through engaging in the dream work process.

Integrations. The sixth and last major theme describes the personal outcomes experienced as a result of participating in the group dream work process. Comparisons to the literature include subthemes of Benefits from the Process, Individual Outcomes, and Significant Dream Work Experiences.

In the study conducted by Hill, Diemer, and Heaton (1997), the participants rated gaining insight, discovering links to waking life, and getting another person’s feedback as the most helpful components. Participants in my study also reported benefits and value in receiving group members’ input on their dreams. In addition they also reported benefits from the work and discussion on group members’ dreams. Notable in the Hill, Diemer, and Heaton (1997) study is that the majority did not rate or list anything that was least helpful. Corroborating this, six of seven participants in my study did not find anything that was not helpful about group dream work. Although one participant commented that at times she perceived some interpretations to be “heavy-handed,” the overall view of participants can be summed up by the following quote: “I can’t imagine how dream work would not be beneficial to people. It’s inconceivable to me.”

In Falk and Hill's (1995) study of divorced or separating women, participants reported positive gains of increased insight into their dreams, and the ability to take positive actions from their awareness. Wright, Ley, and French (1994) wrote that participants in a six-week dream group reported finding solutions to major life issues. Cohen and Bumbaugh (2004) reported that group dream work was helpful to participants in gaining new insight and self-awareness, that dream images represented current waking life issues, and that group dream work was a positive, relaxing, and even fun way to process serious issues.

Participants in my study also reported individual outcomes of insight and self-awareness, ability to relate the dream work to their waking life actions and decisions, and of enjoyment of the process. One participant described the process as "very compelling...very engrossing, and...very, very fun." One reported the most beneficial personal outcome and self-awareness for her has been "...to get closer to recognizing that everybody has their own perceptions," that she is now "willing to listen to ideas that, before I started dream work, I would have discounted."

As cited above, three participants used the insights they gained from group dream work to make decisions in health-related matters. One followed up on "...a medical hunch that turned out to be a really important thing to have done...a pretty dramatic example," another chose treatments that allowed her to conceive and bear a child, and another got a "diagnosis...prognosis...surgeon." These examples call to mind Van De Castle's (1994) description of the ancient Greeks' extensive use of dreams for healing purposes, and of the physician Hippocrates (469-399 B.C.), who used his patients' dreams as an aid in diagnosis and treatment of physical problems.

The literature regarding dream work related to spirituality, bereavement, and death related directly to the Integrations subtheme of Significant Dreams and ensuing meaningful dream work experiences. Related to spirituality, Coholic and Breton (2007) wrote that participants in their study reported that some dreams contained messages or guidance from divine sources, premonitions, or contact with the deceased. Participants in Cohen and Bumbaugh's (2004) group dream work research study reported being able to have more open discussion about feelings and about death. Barrett (2000) wrote that dreams in bereavement therapy could show the stages of grief and bring comfort. Adams and Hyde (2008) explored how two bereaved children found meaning and value from dreams related to deceased loved ones.

All participants in my study wrote or spoke of particularly meaningful group dream work experiences that made a significant impact on their lives, with all of the dreams involving a theme of grief, loss, death, or fear of death that related to their lives in some way. Through working with these dreams in the group dream work process, they found "peace" and "assuaging of guilt," came to an "essential awakening...a recognition of sorrow and fear," and moved from "grief...sadness or regret" to "extreme joy and love." Thus, they mirrored Adams and Hyde's (2008) results of a therapeutic outcome of using dream work to resolve a real-life issue involving death, as well as indicating stages of grief and bringing comfort in bereavement (Barrett, 2000).

Implications

Counselors. Studies by Crook-Lyon and Hill (2004), Hill (2003), Marszalek and Myers (2006), and Pesant and Zandra (2004) indicated that overall, integrating or using dream work as part of counseling sessions has beneficial effects and outcomes for clients.

Specific to issues that clients bring to counseling, Barrett (2000) wrote that dreams in bereavement therapy can show the stages of grief and bring comfort; dreams can be used to explore the impact of war-related PTSD; dreams in cross-cultural therapy can bring new and healing perspectives; and dreams of divorced people can mark improvement in depression. In my study, all seven participants reported meaningful and therapeutic outcomes from working with their dreams about bereavement or death. It is notable that the six participants who submitted a journal entry of a particularly meaningful or significant experience of dream work reported dreams with the theme of death (see Appendix E); the one participant who did not submit a journal entry reported in his interview that he had many recurring dreams of “shooting and killing” per previous military experiences (*suggesting PTSD type dreams.*) One participant stated that she had been introduced to the significance of dream work while going through a divorce and discussing her dreams in counseling sessions. Death and loss in many forms are events that every human being confronts at various times in life, and are common issues brought to counseling sessions. These reported beneficial and therapeutic experiences suggest that counselors could promote healing outcomes from introducing or allowing a discussion and exploration of clients’ dreams about these topics.

Specific to special populations, Kautner (2005), in a study of older people participating in an Ullman dream group, wrote that the two male participants in her study, who originally expressed skepticism about the use of talking about their own or others’ dreams, shared their dreams and responded with positive feedback about the process. One male participant acknowledged that he would never have opened up or shared any

problems to a regular group or to a psychiatrist or even to his family. He admitted that the dream group process was an excellent way to loosen him up.

Similarly, two of the seven participants in my study were also male (ages 34 and 79). Both reported expressing emotions freely in their respective groups; both emphasized the safety, warmth, and non-judgmental nature of the group; and both described experiencing inner feelings of empathy, sympathy, caring, and altruism for other group members. Compassionate Dream Worker (age 79), whose long-running group (5 years) all men's group, said that many of their dreams and dream work discussions centered around work and retirement issues, that there were many emotions, and much "venting" around this issue. Catalyst (age 34), the only male member of his time-limited group/class (six weeks) reported releasing of emotions he did not realize he had been holding on to while telling his dreams in the safe atmosphere of the group. Important implications here are related to counseling methods for men and include non-threatening avenues for engaging men in being comfortable in identifying, expressing, and releasing emotions, and in promoting the open expression of empathy and caring for others.

Kautner (2005) suggested that the dream group could be an encouraging and less threatening venue for self-expression for older people who were not open to talking to a psychotherapist for help with their problems. As most of the men in Compassionate Dream Worker's group were older, there is also the implication that using dream work can engage older people in the counseling process in a non-threatening way.

Counselor Education. Ullman (2001b) wrote that the art of listening, especially listening for feelings, and the art of interacting in a non-invasive way were the two

essential skills of dream work. Deslauriers (2000) wrote that group dream work promoted the development of qualities of authenticity, openness, compassion, empathy, and emotional literacy (being able to recognize and talk about feelings). These are also essential skills and qualities for counselors in training as well as integral for counselors at all stages of professional growth. One could say these are also the very essence and heart of the therapeutic nature of the counseling process. One implication or possibility for counselor educators and counselor education could be the inclusion of the Ullman experiential dream work group methods in some part of the counselor education curriculum. Provost (1999), who facilitated groups with a focus on dream work for counseling students to assist in developing counseling skills, recommended the Ullman method as the best approach for immediately involving all of the group members. Freeman and Vogel (2005) developed and implemented a creative experiential dream interpretation class for counseling and psychology students to help their students develop basic interviewing skills and advanced processing techniques. In final narratives, students shared experiences of personal change, cohesion, self-understanding, and altruism. They also expressed renewed interest in their counseling and psychology careers. In addition, quantitative measures over one semester showed an increase in psychological functioning on a global measure of counseling outcomes.

Boyd (2005) found that dream work was a catalyst for clients to be honest with themselves, to be open to change, and to gain new perspectives. Deslauriers (2000) connected the attaining of qualities fostered by group dream work to adult cognitive development and the ability for more complex thinking and decision-making. This speaks to the counselor educator's task in encouraging the development of cognitive

complexity in counseling students, a crucial element in the growth of a mature counselor.

Participant #1, Treasure Hunter, describes how group dream work did this for her:

Most beneficial to me is to get closer to recognizing that everybody has their own perceptions, and that, you know, we're ten people standing around looking at a painting, and ten people see a different story. I tend to be a little bit rigid, that, you know (*tap, tap sound on table*), 'My view's the best one.' So it's just a reminder that we all have our own perspectives... I've seen myself willing to listen to ideas that, before I started dream work, I would have discounted. So, you know, I've seen a change in me.

Ullman (1994) originally developed the experiential dream group method to teach psychiatric interns to work with dreams and found that this procedure not only helped the interns in working with their own dreams, but also gave them the skills and confidence to work with dreams in a clinical setting with patients. Similarly, counseling students could learn about their own dreams as well as gain knowledge and confidence in discussing dreams with their future clients. In a two-year study by Sarlin (1991), medical students reported lowered stress levels and promotion of personal and professional identities while participating in an Ullman method dream group. Perhaps participation in dream groups might be incorporated into internship experiences when counseling students are starting to develop their professional identities as well as having real-life interactions with clients and the counseling process. Internship students and their clients could derive multiple benefits from this addition. Students would be both experiencing and honing skills of listening for feelings and non-invasive interaction, thus giving them the knowledge and ability to provide an atmosphere of empathy and safety for their clients during counseling

sessions. In addition, they could be promoting their own professional identities, lowering their stress levels, and learning how to be comfortable in discussing and exploring dreams that their clients may bring to sessions.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings from this qualitative study indicate that individuals participating in group dream work that uses the Ullman model as a foundational structure experienced intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits from the real-time process as well as beneficial outcomes that extended into their lives outside of the dream group. Participants described themselves as identifying, experiencing, expressing, releasing, and sharing a wide range of emotions while participating in the process. Participants also described experiencing qualities of empathy, caring, understanding, and altruism for their fellow group members. They described using skills of listening, non-judgmental interaction, and collaboration to construct meaning and positive outcome for others and themselves. They reported beneficial outcomes extending into their lives in the areas of personal growth (e.g. seeing multiple viewpoints/perspectives), health, relationships, careers, and grief and loss. They described experiencing all of these processes and outcomes in an atmosphere of safety, warmth, and respect. It is notable that these processes and outcomes parallel the qualities, intentions, and situations integral to optimum counseling processes and outcomes. These processes start with the education of the counselor, continue into the counselor/client relationship, and ultimately aim to conclude with beneficial outcomes for counselors, their clients, and the people whose lives they touch.

The findings from this qualitative study have added new information in that this study has given voice to participants' actual personal experiences of the process and

outcomes of group dream work. Although only one of the seven participants reported that she had first experienced the benefits of dream work in a counseling session, all reported benefits in areas that are addressed in counseling sessions. Thus, further research into how and when these methods of group dream work could be incorporated into individual and/or group counseling would add valuable information to the field in this area. Starting with counselor education, one avenue for further research could be conducting a dream group using the Ullman structure with counseling students during their internship experiences (as suggested above), and then conducting qualitative interviews with them per relating the skills gained from the group dream work processes to working with actual clients. In light of the beneficial outcomes for the two male participants in this study, other more specific research could target the benefits for dream work with males, currently an underserved population in counseling.

All of the participants in this study commented on the unique bonds and relationships that are created through the group dream work process, notwithstanding social or other differences (it “breaks down barriers.”) Thus, another source of valuable information would be research in the area of diversity, studying the potential of group dream work to create bonds and understanding among people of different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, ages, and cultures. This type of research could lead to information on how group dream work might fulfill the vision of one participant in this study, “...I think it has the potential to bring peace...to help people understand that we’re one species ” and of Montague Ullman himself, who wrote, “Every member of our species is a dreamer” (Ullman, 2001a, p.11). He stated that people in dream sharing groups might be able to play a role in keeping the unity of the human species and ultimately in its survival.

Limitations

Possible limitations of this study include my own personal biases as the principal researcher and my relative inexperience as a qualitative researcher. My personal biases included my own very positive experiences with group dream work; thus my passion and enthusiasm for the subject may have caused me to see only the positive aspects of the data and to discount any other views. To counteract this possibility, I included in each interview a question regarding any non-beneficial or non-helpful aspects of group dream work. In addition, I kept a reflective journal of my own thoughts and feelings, and relied on my research team to give me their first and second impressions of the data as well as their comments and approval on the final themes and subthemes. In addition, these team members, with their cumulative experiences in conducting and serving on qualitative research teams served as checks and balances for my inexperience. Nonetheless, with the richness of the data, there still may have been some salient factors that I overlooked.

Other possible limitations in this study included participant and data collection factors. Although three of the participants listed their ethnicity as being related to another country (English, Australian, and British Isles), all identified their race as White or Caucasian. This may or may not be representative of people in dream groups as a whole, and there would possibly be differences in experiences from people of other races or cultures. Five of the participants were female, two were male, and all lived in either the mid-Atlantic or southeastern region of the United States; again this may or may not be representative of dream group experiences overall. Per data collection, one participant out of the seven, who did give an information-rich interview, did not submit a journal

entry, creative art response, or reflective artist statement. Thus, some potentially rich triangulated data sources were absent from the study.

Although perhaps not a limitation, a personal regret for me in this study is that I was not able to obtain interviews with participants who also used the expressive arts as an integral part of their dream group experiences. The persons in this category who I contacted and would have been willing to participate had not experienced group dream work for over a year, and so did not meet the requirements for the study. In addition, the collected data from the triangulated sources had reached a saturation point as well as a high level of rich and thick description and information, more than enough to analyze for the purposes of the study. The personal regret comes from my love of the expressive arts, and my very positive initial experience with group dream work, which did include an expressive arts component.

Personal Reflections

As I listened to participants describe their experiences with group dream work, I remembered my own experiences with the process and found myself wishing I myself were participating in a dream group again. I felt my own excitement and enthusiasm re-ignited by their passion and their descriptions of deep and meaningful insights and the uniqueness and warmth of their dream group relationships. Even though this researcher excitement is allowed, and necessary, as part of the process of heuristic studies (Moustakas, 1990), I did restrain myself from expressing it out loud during most of the interviews. However, the energy of participant # 7, Energizer, overcame my resistance. She came back with a challenge to me to do as she had done – to form my own group!

A research team member who had previously experienced group dream work expressed similar feelings and desires. Two other research team members who had never experienced group dream work expressed strong interest in being part of such a group or even just talking about their dreams. Also interesting was the effect of the interview on Participant #6, Catalyst, who was not currently in a group. He commented that participating in the interview brought the experience back to him in an exciting way, and made him realize what a strong impact the group dream work had had on him at the time.

As a parting reflection, I realize that even though I did not interview participants who had used the expressive arts as part of the group dream work process, the power of the expressive arts came through in the data sources of the creative response artworks and artist statement reflections. In each artist statement I was struck by the profundity and poetic prose of the statements. They seemed to illuminate a completely different level of understanding and awareness than the participant's verbal responses to the interview questions and to provide an additional level of depth to the written journal reflections. These two interrelated data sources (the visual artwork and the artist statement) seemed to parallel the process of dream work itself – using language and verbal skills to make meaning of the images from dreams. This suggests another potential research agenda or direction, that of exploring the connection of dream work and the expressive arts (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Mellick, 2001) with the field of left-brain and right-brain communication and collaboration (Lindell, 2011; Whitman, Holcomb, & Zanes, 2010).

Summary

In this chapter, after a brief overview of the purpose of the study and the methodology, I gave a brief summary of the findings in answer to the research questions.

I then presented a creative synthesis of the data per the last phase of the heuristic design methodology (Moustakas, 1990). After a comparison of the six major themes with the existent literature, I discussed the implications for counselors and counselor education, and gave suggestions for further research. Lastly, I provided possible limitations to this research study and concluded with my personal reflections. Through giving voice to participants' actual experiences in a natural setting and over varying lengths of time, the findings of this qualitative study have added new information to the field of counseling by showing the potential benefits of utilizing group dream work methods for counselor educators, for counselors, and ultimately for clients.

I end this chapter and this study with a quote from Participant #5, Integrator, from her journal entry: *"Our dream group, at its best, is a sacred space of communion and transformation."* These few words encompass and distill the essence of the group dream work experience as described by all of the participants.

CHAPTER SIX

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

Experiences of the Process and Outcomes of Group Dream Work

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Abstract

This qualitative heuristic design study gave voice to seven participants' experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work. Analysis of triangulated data sources yielded six major themes: Parameters, Space, Inner Activations, Connections, Transformations, and Integrations. All participants described beneficial outcomes from the process. Findings indicate that life issues addressed and resolved through group dream work are similar to life issues that clients bring to counseling sessions.

Keywords: group dream work, Ullman method

Introduction

Dreams are a universal experience, and people often wish to discuss their dreams in counseling sessions in order to make sense of their waking experiences (Marszalek & Myers, 2006). The interpretation of dreams for the purposes of insight, guidance, and healing has been in existence since at least the beginning of recorded history (Van De Castle, 1994). Nonetheless, the practice of utilizing dreams for psychological healing in modern psychotherapy came to the forefront only at the beginning of the twentieth century with the 1900 publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud's seminal work on the psychoanalytic theory of the purpose and meaning of dreams.

With the opening of this door, other psychoanalytic theorists such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Fritz Perls soon developed their own theories and methods of working with dreams in therapy with individuals and groups (Pesant & Zandra, 2004; Van De Castle, 1994). In the latter part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, humanistic, eclectic, and integrated theories and models of working with dreams have emerged (Alperin, 2004; Koch, 2009; Lamb & Hollis, 1994; Marszalek & Myers, 2006; Mellick, 2001; Shuttleworth-Jordan, Saayman, & Faber, 1988; Taylor, 2009; Ullman, 1994, 2006).

These newer models and ways of working with dreams have become more and more accessible and comprehensible for counselors and laypeople alike. There has been a growing interest in these methods that no longer require years of specialized training for counselors in psychoanalytic methods, nor years of intensive psychodynamic therapy for clients (Coholic & LeBreton, 2007). A review of the current literature reflected that

people often wished to discuss their dreams in counseling sessions in order to make sense of their waking experiences (Marszalek & Myers, 2006; Pesant & Zandra, 2004.)

Thirteen studies cited by Crook and Hill (2003) indicated the efficacy of dream work. Hill (2003) gave a general overview of the results of this research saying that it indicated that dream work is effective with clients, that it is suitable for a wide variety of people, that its success depends on client and therapist factors, and that it can be valuable as a stand-alone therapeutic tool even in a single session. In their extensive reviews of case reports and descriptive studies, Pesant and Zandra (2004) reported indications of three types of gains from working with dreams: client insights, increased client involvement in therapy, and better understanding of client dynamics and progress. Even so, Crook and Hill (2003) found that most therapists in their study reported a lack of knowledge in working with dreams other than listening to the clients' recounting of their dreams. Pesant and Zandra (2004) concurred that clinicians, even though interested in working with dreams, felt unprepared to do so.

This study, using a heuristic inquiry qualitative design (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990) gave voice to the unique perspectives of seven individuals in ten actual dream work groups or classes. The foundational question for heuristic inquiry is, "What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?" (Patton, 2002, p. 107). In keeping with heuristic design, the first author's experiences as a participant in group dream work enhanced and informed this study. She first experienced (and resonated strongly with) group dream work in 2003 in a master's level counseling class in dream work and expressive arts in which she participated in weekly dream group sessions using the

Ullman method of experiential dream work (Ullman, 1994) combined with expressive arts responses to her own and group members' dreams.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of individuals participating in dream work groups that use the Ullman experiential dream group method (Ullman, 1994, 2006) as a foundation for exploring and finding meaning and waking life relevance from dreams. Montague Ullman (1916-2008), a psychoanalytically trained psychiatrist, developed this method as a way to train psychiatric interns to work with their own and their patients' dreams. The Ullman method features a series of structured steps and emphasizes the psychological safety of the dreamer (Ullman, 1994, 2006).

In this method, one person in the group, the dreamer, verbally shares a dream. Group members first ask objective questions about the details of the dream, and then subjective questions about feelings and associations. They then state their own projections about the meaning of the dream using the beginning phrase of "If it were my dream..." The dreamer is then free to respond (or not) with his or her own interpretations and/or resonances or to engage in discussion with the group. The findings from this study of actual participants' experiences provide a rich source of information and practical knowledge for counselors on the process of dream work itself, and especially on how clients may experience beneficial outcomes related to the process.

Method

Qualitative Methods

This study employed qualitative methodology as it allowed the researchers to explore and discover the process and outcomes of group dream work in an in-depth manner with each participant. Creswell (2007) defined qualitative research in terms of its

common processes and characteristics, such as studying the phenomena in a natural setting rather than a laboratory, focusing on the perspectives and meanings that the participants give to a phenomenon or process, and the shared interpreting of the data by the researcher, the participants, and the readers. Patton (2002) characterized qualitative research as “particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic” (p. 55). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) wrote that qualitative research “consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). For this study, the qualitative approach held great promise to discover and make visible the process and outcomes of working with the inherently invisible phenomenon of dreams.

Heuristic Design

This study employed the qualitative methods of heuristic inquiry (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). Similar to phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), the focus of a heuristic design is to fully and vividly recreate the lived experiences of participants of a phenomenon from their own frames of reference (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). The major difference and the overall unique feature of heuristic inquiry is the “extent to which it legitimizes and places at the fore the personal experiences, reflections, and insights of the researcher” (Patton, 2002, p. 108). Thus, instead of attempting to detach from and bracket off any personal emotions or thoughts about the phenomenon, the researcher nurtures a sense of connectedness and relationship with the studied phenomenon. Another difference is in the final presentation of the data. In phenomenology, the unique experiences and qualities of the individual participants are distilled into a description of the essence of the studied phenomenon. In heuristic inquiry, the participants retain their unique identities: “Phenomenology ends

with the essence of experience; heuristics retains the essence of the person in experience” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 43).

Participants

After IRB approval of the research proposal, the first author initiated the recruitment of participants. With every contact, she included information on the criteria for the study and an electronic or hard copy of the Informed Consent Document. She began by contacting individuals she had met through her preliminary immersion into group dream work in the field, i.e. attending lectures, weekend workshops, a five day intensive institute, and participating in a weekly women’s dream group. She first contacted by telephone the facilitator of the women’s dream group who agreed to forward an informational email to current and past members of dream groups and workshops as well as give verbal information to current members. The first author then made telephone and email contact with individuals whom she had met in workshops or trainings on group dream work.

She continued the recruitment through posting a notice on the International Association for the Study of Dreams website, and through criterion and snowball sampling methods (Patton, 2002). From 11 personal contacts of potential participants, seven people met the criteria and agreed to participate in the study. One was not able to commit to the time required, and three did not meet the criteria of having participated in group dream work within the last nine months. All participants were from the east coast of the United States, six from mid-Atlantic States, and one from a south Atlantic state.

Participants included five females and two males, all of which identified as Caucasian or White. In addition, three participants listed ethnicity: one English, one

Australian, and one British Isles. Ages of the participants ranged from 34 to 79 with a median age of 56. Occupations included: retired chiropractic physician, retired counseling professional, human services manager, yoga teacher, court mediator/life coach/teacher, stay-at-home mom, and student.

Regarding the status of participation in dream work groups, five of the participants were regularly attending a dream group at the time of the interview, one was currently teaching and facilitating a dream work class and group, and one reported no present involvement in a dream work group. The five currently participating in a dream group reported the length of time in their current groups in a range from two years to sixteen years. The approximate number of group dream work sessions attended ranged from six to 1,000, and participants reported working with their dreams on their own, or in a group in a range of six months to 70 years, with a median length of 15 years.

Per the facilitation of the dream work groups, two participants reported leaderless or peer-facilitated groups, two reported that co-therapist mental health professionals facilitated their group, and one reported that an academic professional who was also a mental health professional taught and facilitated the group. Two participants reported that they themselves took on a dual role for each of the two dream groups they attended, serving as facilitators and participating as active group members, sharing their own dreams on an equal basis with the other group members.

To insure participant emotional and psychological safety, the first author provided informed consent information, written and verbal, in which she assured participants that they were in charge of any information they wished to disclose, that she would not pressure them to reveal private information, that they had the option to pass on any

question, and that they were free to quit the interview or the study at any time. To cover the possibility that participants' responses could have indicated a need for a mental health referral, or that they could have experienced emotional or psychological distress in recounting their experiences, she provided to all participants the names and contact information of two licensed mental health professionals who also specialized in dream work, and who conducted sessions in person and by phone.

Data Collection

The data collection took place over a four-month time frame. The criteria for participating in the study included a commitment to engage in a 45-60 minute face-to-face audio taped interview, to submit up to a one page written journal entry describing a significant or meaningful experience of group dream work, and to create and submit a creative response artwork with accompanying brief written artist statement that portrayed their overall experience of group dream work. For the artwork, the primary researcher provided art materials for participants to use and to keep, as well as self-addressed and postage-paid envelopes in which to return the completed work.

The first author conducted seven individual interviews (45-60 minutes), four in person, and three through Skype video-conferencing. After each interview, she immediately wrote first impressions and reflections on a contact summary sheet. She personally transcribed each interview, removed identifying information, and sent the verbatim transcript to each participant by email attachment to check for accuracy and to ask for any additions or deletions. Six of the seven responded to this email request. Six of the seven participants submitted the requested written journal entries, artwork, and artist statements through regular mail and/or email attachments.

Data Analysis

Following heuristic design (Moustakas, 1990), the first author immersed herself in the collective data of each participant, one at a time. She constructed an initial overall case display template or codebook for each participant including major categories and which encompassed all the forms of data (interview, journal, artwork, and artist statement). As the data analysis continued, she added preliminary themes, subthemes, memos, and reflections from herself as well as from research team members to this data display.

To identify the themes and qualities in the transcribed interview data, she used the phenomenological data reduction structure of horizontalization named and outlined by Moustakas (1994). Using this structure produces lists of statements that describe the topic and are assumed to have equal value. After eliminating overlapping and repetitive statements the researcher groups the essential statements or horizons into clusters or themes, from which she identifies sub-themes and qualities.

In the analysis of the data for this study, the primary researcher started by arranging participants' statements under *a priori* or predetermined categories corresponding to the interview questions, journal entries, and artist statements. These included overall experience, experience as the dreamer working with one's own dream, experience as a group member working with others' dreams, relationship with dreams, significant experiences, carryover to life outside the dream group, beneficial or non-beneficial elements. In addition, for each participant, one other research team member separately reviewed all of the data from that participant, identified major themes, subthemes, and wrote memos and reflections. The primary researcher then added these

to the overall data display. After eliminating the overlapping and repetitive statements, she again went through the statements, arranged them into major themes, and identified the subthemes. A third research team member then took a final look at this composite data and added memos and reflections.

The primary researcher completed this process first for each individual set of data, and then for the data from all participants as a whole. After composing an individual depiction of each participant, she constructed a case display analysis table, and wrote a narrative portrait using verbatim quotes to illuminate the subthemes from each participant. She gave each participant an alias related to each one's unique perspective and voice:

- Treasure Hunter: "I'm an enormously curious person, and working dreams is a curious person's nirvana. It's like every time I work a dream, it's like a treasure hunt."
- Investigator: "I also tend to forget there are other people in the group when I start asking questions about the dream; I want to bore in like a lawyer questioning his client."
- Sacred Space Dream Worker: "For me the experience of doing dream work has certainly been a sacred space."
- Compassionate Dream Worker: "I'm glad we're here. I'm glad we're all here...to help each other."
- Integrator: "If dream work is unwrapping a gift, then how we use it is vital. It's in the integration that you really use the gift that's been unwrapped."

- Catalyst: “I was like a...catalyst because when my full dream came out everyone realized ‘Wow, this is pretty powerful. We want a release now as well.’ So then all these big powerful dreams came out.”
- Energizer: “I just want to keep it going – that energy that I get. The energy boost is awesome.”

As a final step of member checking, the first author sent the finalized narrative portrait and the chosen alias for each participant’s review and approval.

Taking all of the themed individual data, the first author then identified the common themes and subthemes and constructed a case display of the composite themes and followed with a narrative description of each theme and related subthemes. Research team members reviewed and approved these composite major themes and subthemes. As the culminating step in the heuristic design, she used the participants’ unique perspectives and verbatim quotes of their experiences to write a creative synthesis of the data.

Results

The central research question for this study was “What are participants’ experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work?” The three subquestions were: (1) What are participants’ experiences of working with their own dreams? (2) What are participants’ experiences working with group members’ dreams? (3) What are participants’ experiences of the group leader or facilitator (if there is one)?

Providing answers to these questions, six major themes and related subthemes emerged from the analysis of the combined triangulated data sources noted above. The six major themes of Parameters, Space, Inner Activations, Connections, Transformations, and Integrations provide a framework for participants’ descriptions of their experiences

of the process of group dream work and for the immediate and extended outcomes. The description of these themes and related subthemes follow in the narrative below.

Theme 1: Parameters

The organizational structure of the group including time elements, the physical setting, and the number of people in the group had an effect on how participants experienced the process. Six of the seven participants agreed that ten people became “too many” that “people don’t offer as much depth and insight,” that there was “not enough time to work on dreams,” or for everyone to have a turn that wished to share. All reported the length of their groups to be one and a half to two hours. Physical settings included a private home, a church, a public dining area, a professional space, and were described as “secure...symbolically,” and “comfortable.”

Theme 2: Space

The qualities of safety and respect provided by the structure of the psychological space proved crucial to the process of group dream work. The structured procedure of the Ullman method of group dream work (Ullman, 1994) provided the foundation and framework for this space and the facilitator(s) and/or the group members themselves held it in place. Qualities of safety, comfort, warmth, respect, and trust permeated participants’ experience of this space. They described it as “comforting to have that structure and that space,” and as “a warmth that...embraces everyone.” Facilitators in the groups played an anchoring role in “holding energetic space.” They contributed to the “safe feeling” by holding the “boundaries” and creating a “safety net” while themselves coming “from a space of compassion and understanding.” The lack of judgment and

criticism, and the absence of advice giving provided evidence of respect for the dreamer – “There was no one judging or anything else...no kind of animosity or badness.”

Theme 3: Inner Activations

The actual dream work process began from the inner worlds of the participants, starting with the ultimate inner phenomena of dreams, and continuing with emotions, thoughts, cognitive and intuitive information processing, and physical sensations. Participants on the verge of sharing a dream with the group experienced nervousness, apprehension, shyness, vulnerability, excitement, enthusiasm, exhilaration, anticipation, intense curiosity, and hopefulness. They experienced some of the same emotions while listening to others' dreams (“intense curiosity,” excitement); however, they did not report nervousness, vulnerability, or apprehensiveness. Strong emotions, images, and physical sensations arose at moments of insight, both for their own dreams (“Oh, Wow!”), and for others' dreams (“I just get really excited!” and that it's like “a tidal wave of energy,” or “a light bulb that goes off in my head.”) Although two participants reported noticing internal judgmental thoughts arising, the overriding qualities reported and expressed outwardly when working with others' dreams were empathy, sympathy, and altruism.

Theme 4: Connections

Group members made connections by the exchanging, giving, and receiving of ideas, emotions, and energies through the vehicle of the dream. As well as establishing the foundation for interaction and connection among the group members, participants found it to be personally valuable to share a dream. In the telling of the dream, they experienced new insights and clarification: “like hearing it for the first time,” and “a million more details came out.” As the process moved into the “important and pivotal”

question and answer phase of “looking at the dream itself,” the group members started to experience a “flow” as they engaged in a dialogue with the dreamer through asking questions about the dream. This connecting “flow” continued into the sharing insights phase using the “If it were my dream...” protocol, as “a nice flow of a way to engage each other.”

Theme 5: Transformations

Participants experienced transformations of their dreams, of themselves as individuals and as part of the transformation of the group. Participants’ dreams transformed, both for the dreamer and for each group member through being “worked on” collaboratively by the group. The culmination of this process was a “gelling and coalescing” into “a coherent narrative” from previously “meaningless images,” that now was ready to be transformed again into a unique and personal meaning for each group member. Even dreams with negative content or the “worst nightmare” revealed helpful and positive meanings and outcomes after going through the group dream work process. Individually, participants found themselves “profoundly moved” by people’s dreams and the meanings found through the group dream work process, and experienced “profound life altering moments.” As one said, “How can you *not* be transformed by dreams?”

Participants experienced the transformation of the group as a result of the long-running nature of some of the groups, and of the unique and emotionally close relationships formed through interaction in the group dream work process. Because of the intimacy of the nature of group dream work, people who “are quite different from you,” and who would not have been intimate or even interact with each other otherwise

became very emotionally and spiritually close (“because they’re connected to our inner connectedness”) within the group.

Theme 6: Integrations

Beneficial outcomes or integrations from the group dream work process began occurring within the group itself and continued into the participants’ lives “outside of group as well.” In the role of dreamer they experienced gaining expanded views of the dream from multiple perspectives, and receiving “a full spectrum of interpretation.” They reported experiencing various levels of resonance feeling free to “pick and choose which ones ring most true.” All participants reported they benefited from and gained value from working with others’ dreams - “regardless of what the dreamer gets,” it is a “win-win situation,” and one gets “value out of just about every dream another dreamer tells.”

Beneficial outcomes of group dream work experiences in participants’ lives outside of the group occurred in a variety of areas. These included “an impact on my personal and professional decisions, on my relationships,” and even on financial decisions. In medical and health areas, the information and insights from dream work influenced three participants in making health related decisions, all with positive outcomes. Intrapersonal outcomes included “a self-awareness, and choosing to pay attention to those things...beyond the session...life choices,” and “insight and awareness that changes our lives outside of group.” The process contributed to a quality of “becoming less self-conscious...both emotionally and spiritually.” Participating in the group dream process work assisted participants to integrate larger perspectives of humanity and life itself. It broke down “the barriers...of cultural diversity, or age

diversity, or whatever background,” and instilled “a great appreciation for the human experience and for the commonalities that people share.”

In their journal entry submissions and in their interviews, participants wrote and spoke of particularly meaningful group dream work experiences that made a significant impact on their lives. All reported dreams with a theme of loss, death or fear of death that related to participants’ lives in some way, and all experienced a resolution and relief from the group dream work process. Outcomes included feeling “at peace about my sister’s death...assuaging any lingering guilt,” and “recognizing that I had finally connected to my sorrow and fear surrounding my infertility.”

Lastly, through their participating in and experiencing of group dream work, participants described insights that led to visions for the potential of group dream work from the personal to the global level. One participant realized that “This is what I’m supposed to do!” She received the “drive and validation...to continue this into a career,” and the “self-confidence” to hopefully make a difference with it. Another saw therapeutic uses for lucid dreaming, and another commented that “so many things that people are afraid of in themselves and others – could be worked through and resolved” through group dream work, that it could help “facilitate better self-understanding and better other-understanding.” There was a wish that “it were more prevalent in our society,” and a belief that it’s potential is “profound,” with the “potential to bring world peace...” Another participant described group dream work as “Akin to the knights of the round table – coming together for truth/wholeness/freedom.”

Discussion

Findings of this study indicate that through participating in the process of group dream work, participants experienced beneficial outcomes whether they were engaged in the process as a “dreamer” or person sharing a dream, or as a group member assisting others to find meaning in their dreams. They described benefits from experiencing the immediate process within the group as well as beneficial outcomes in their lives outside of the group. Findings also indicate that life issues addressed and resolved through group dream work are similar to issues that clients bring to counseling sessions. A comparison of these findings with the reviewed existent literature follows.

Parameters: As in the empirical literature on group dream work (Cohen & Bumbaugh, 2004; Coholic & Breton, 2007; Falk & Hill, 1995; Kautner, 2005; Kolchakian & Hill, 2002; Sarlin, 1991; Shuttleworth-Jordan, 1995), participants in the current study reported the number of people in the various groups averaged from six to 10. In contrast, however, to the reviewed empirical literature, in which each study focused on one specific population in dream groups that were formed as part of a time-limited research or case study, the seven participants in this study came from different professions; each came from a different group (two of them participated in two separate groups). Five of the seven had been participating in their groups in a range of two to fifteen years and all except one participated in the dream groups solely for their own personal interest and growth. The one exception participated in the dream group as part of a class requirement for a health-related curriculum.

Space: A comparison to the literature includes a focus on the subthemes of Safety, Comfort and Warmth, and Respect. Of paramount importance in the Ullman

model (1994; 2006) are the Safety and Discovery factors, keeping the dreamer in control of what to disclose or accept, thus allowing an atmosphere of safe exploration and discovery. Toombs and Toombs (1985) wrote that as opposed to the confrontation common in group therapy, most of the interpersonal interaction in a dream work group focuses on the dream content and is geared towards problem-solving, not the intrapersonal processes or the interpersonal interactions among group members, thus fostering a sense of safety and security. Throughout all of the interviews in the current study, participants emphasized feeling safe in an environment that offered confidentiality, emotional support, comfort, and warmth. They attributed this to the structured protocol of the group and to the facilitators who held the structure in place. “Because we asked questions *about* the dream, it was safe...never any fighting about it...always safe.”

Inner Activations. Comparisons to the literature include the subthemes of Moments of Insight, and Empathy, Sympathy, and Altruism. Hill, Knox, Hess, Crook-Lyon, Goates-Jones, and Sim (2004) defined insight as meaning any variation of an “ahah” experience, in which the client expressed a new perception of self or the world. Participants’ responses in the current study describe a variety of cognitive, emotional, and physical inner activations at the moment of an “Ah-ha!” insight, or discovery, both with their own dreams and group members’ dreams.

Toombs and Toombs (1985) reported that the sharing of a dream constructed complex personal interactions among the group members, which in turn promoted deep empathy, respect, and trust. Kautner (2005) reported that dreamers were surprised to experience a high degree of perceptiveness, sensitivity, and caring from the co-dreamers, whom they had not previously met or known. Deslauriers (2000) wrote that group dream

work promoted qualities of spiritual intelligence such as authenticity, openness, compassion, and truthfulness. He emphasized emotional literacy (being able to recognize and talk about feelings) and empathy as qualities of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) fostered by group dream work. Responses from participants in the current study describing feelings of empathy, sympathy, and altruism for their fellow group members corroborate these findings (e.g. “close to tears myself,” “sympathy, understanding, tolerance,” “embrace them and help them”). It is notable that the majority of responses pertaining to empathy, caring, and understanding came from the two male participants in the study.

Connections. A comparison to the literature includes the subtheme of Question and Answer. Hill et al. (2006) found that clients received more insight into their dreams from the exploration stage than the actual insight stage. The authors concluded that spending more time in the exploration stage (e.g., description, re-experiencing, associations, waking life triggers) would be more beneficial to clients than going quickly to the insight stage or than interpreting the dream for the client. Responses indicating the high value placed on the question and answer phase of the dream work process by participants in this study support the conclusions of Hill et al.

Transformations. Comparisons to the literature include the subthemes of Transformation of the Dream, and Transformation of the Group. Toombs and Toombs (1985) acknowledged that although an individual’s dream was initially an inherently personal and private event, once it was shared it became both public and social creation. Stefanakis (1995) described the process of sharing dreams as essentially a social

interaction and that dreamers and therapists (or whomever the dream was shared with) constructed the meaning of the dream through language and social discourse.

Participants in the current study gave descriptions in rich detail of their interactions with group members as they constructed and re-constructed the initial shared dream. They described a creative and collaborative process, “It’s like we’re all collaborating on a story,” and “there is a great melting pot of all the ideas that come together.” Through this process the dream became more and more refined in details and associations for the dreamer. The group members, by all making the dream their own, created still more unique meanings for the original shared dream.

The results of Kautner’s (2005) study indicated that combining people with different personalities in dream groups positively affected dream sharing and had the potential to create connections among diverse populations. Five of seven participants in the current study commented specifically that although their groups were composed of people very different from each other, people developed emotionally close and even spiritual relationships through engaging in the dream work process.

Integrations. Comparisons to the literature include subthemes of Benefits from the Process, Individual Outcomes, and Significant Dream Work Experiences. In the study by Hill, Diemer, and Heaton (1997), the majority of participants did not rate or list anything that was least helpful. Corroborating this, six of seven participants in this study found nothing that was not helpful about group dream work. Summing up participants’ views, “I can’t imagine how dream work would not be beneficial to people. It’s inconceivable to me.” One said the most beneficial personal outcome for her has been “...to get closer to recognizing that everybody has their own perceptions,” that she is now

“willing to listen to ideas that, before I started dream work, I would have discounted.”

This supports Deslauriers (2000), who connected the qualities of spiritual intelligence (Noble, 2000) and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000) gained through group dream work to adult cognitive development and the ability for more complex thinking and decision-making.

In Falk and Hill's (1995) study of divorced or separating women, participants reported positive gains of increased insight into their dreams, and the ability to take positive actions from their awareness. Wright, Ley, and French (1994) wrote that participants in a six-week dream group reported finding solutions to major life issues. Cohen and Bumbaugh (2004) reported that group dream work was helpful to participants in gaining new insight and self-awareness, that dream images represented current waking life issues, and that group dream work was a positive, relaxing, and even fun way to process serious issues. Echoing this last statement, one participant in this study described the process as “very compelling...very engrossing, and...very, very fun.”

Participants in the current study also reported individual outcomes of insight and self-awareness, ability to relate the dream work to their waking life actions and decisions, and of enjoyment of the process. Three used their insights to make decisions in health related matters, including surgery, medical procedures, and fertility treatments, bringing to mind Van De Castle's (1994) description of the ancient Greeks' extensive use of dreams for healing purposes, and of the physician Hippocrates (469-399 B.C.), who used his patients' dreams as an aid in diagnosis and treatment of physical problems.

The literature regarding dream work related to spirituality, bereavement, and death related directly to the Integrations subtheme of Significant Dreams and ensuing

meaningful dream work experiences. All reported dreams involving a theme of loss, death or fear of death that related to participants' lives in some way. Through working with these dreams in the group dream work process, they found "peace" and "assuaging of guilt," and coming to an "essential awakening...a recognition of sorrow and fear." Thus, they mirrored Adams and Hyde's (2008) results of a therapeutic outcome of using dream work to resolve a real-life issue involving death, as well as indicating stages of grief and bringing comfort in bereavement (Barrett, 2000).

Limitations

Possible limitations of this study included the first author's personal biases, specifically her positive personal experiences with group dream work, and her limited experience as a qualitative researcher. To offset these factors, she included an interview question regarding any non-beneficial aspects of the process, and then relied on her research team to give their input throughout the data analysis as well as approval on the final themes and subthemes. In addition, the first author kept a reflexive journal throughout the process in which she expressed and separated her own thoughts and emotions from the recorded data. This allowed her to reflect on any similarities and/or differences to the participants' responses.

Other possible limitations in this study included participant and data collection factors. All seven participants listed their race as white or Caucasian, and all lived on the east coast of the United States; thus they may or may not be representative of people in dream groups as a whole. People of other races or cultures, or in other locations may report different experiences. Per data collection, one participant, who gave an information-rich interview, did not submit a journal entry, creative response artwork, or

artist statement. Thus, some potentially rich triangulated data sources were absent from the study.

Implications

The findings from this qualitative study indicate that individuals participating in the process of group dream work that uses the Ullman model as a foundational structure experienced intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits. Participants described benefits from the real-time process of the group dream work as well as beneficial outcomes that extended into their lives outside of the dream group. They described themselves as identifying, experiencing, expressing, releasing, and sharing a wide range of emotions while participating in the process. Participants also described experiencing qualities of empathy, caring, understanding, and altruism for their fellow group members.

Participants described using skills of listening, non-judgmental interaction, and collaboration to construct meaning and positive outcomes for others and themselves. They reported beneficial outcomes extending into their lives in the areas of personal growth (e.g. seeing multiple viewpoints/perspectives), health, relationships, careers, and grief and loss. They described experiencing all of these processes and outcomes in an atmosphere of safety, warmth, and respect. It is notable that these processes and outcomes parallel the qualities, intentions, and situations integral to optimum counseling processes and outcomes. These processes start with the education of the counselor, continue into the counselor/client relationship, and ultimately aim to conclude with beneficial outcomes for counselors, their clients, and the people whose lives they touch.

Future Research

The findings from this qualitative study have added new information in that this study has given voice to participants' actual personal experiences of the process and outcomes of group dream work in natural settings and over varying periods of time. Although only one of the seven participants reported that she had first experienced the benefits of dream work in a counseling session, all reported benefits in areas that are addressed in counseling sessions, especially in dealing with issues of grief and loss in various forms. Thus, further research into how and when these methods of group dream work could be incorporated into individual and/or group counseling would add valuable information to the field in this area.

In light of the beneficial outcomes for the two male participants in this study, other more specific research could target the benefits of group dream work with males, currently an underserved population in counseling. All of the participants in this study commented on the unique bonds and relationships that are created through the group dream work process, notwithstanding social or other differences (it "breaks down barriers.") Thus, another source of valuable information would be research in the area of diversity, studying the potential of group dream work to create bonds and understanding among people of different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, ages, and cultures.

Summary

This qualitative study has added new information to the counseling field in the area of group dream work in that it has given voice to participants' actual personal experiences of the process, in rich detail, starting from how they experienced the organization and parameters of the group, to their inner emotional and cognitive

experiences, to their experiences of the interactions with group members through the vehicle of the dream. Bridging their experiences of the process to the final outcomes and integrations were their descriptions of the creative collaboration process, which resulted in the transformation of the dream, the group, and the individuals themselves.

As one participant wrote in her submitted journal entry, “Our dream group, at its best, is a sacred space of communion and transformation.” These few words encompass and distill the essence of the group dream work experience as described by all of the participants.

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APPENDIX A**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of The Process and Outcomes of Group Dream Work

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. This doctoral dissertation research project, “Experiences of The Process and Outcomes of Group Dream Work,” will be conducted through an in-person or Skype video interview with each individual participant at a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location.

RESEARCHERS

The Responsible Principal Investigator of this study is Radha Horton-Parker, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Darden College of Education, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. The primary investigator is Penny Makris, M.A., doctoral student in counseling, Darden College of Education, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of using the exploration of dreams to assist clients to gain insight and guidance in individual counseling sessions. Very few studies have been conducted on the process and outcomes of working with dreams in a dedicated dream group. The main purpose of this research study is to explore and describe the experiences of people who have participated in a dream work group that uses the Ullman dream work method (Ullman, 1994) as a foundation. In this method, each group member has the opportunity to share a dream, and the group members are active participants in assisting the dreamer to find meaning in the dream by asking clarifying questions, exploring feelings and metaphors, and making the dream their own by stating their own projections (i.e. “If it were my dream...”). Participants will be asked to share their experiences of the process from the point of view of being the one who shares a dream and from the point of view of being a group member who assists the person who shares a dream.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of the process and outcomes of group dream work. There are no experimental procedures in this research. You will be asked to:

- (a) Participate in one in-person or Skype video-conference interview of 45 -60 minutes
- (b) Submit a brief written journal reflection about a significant dream work experience
- (c) Create one visual piece of artwork (e.g., drawing, design, collage, or painting) that is your creative response to your experience of the process of group dream work and write a brief artist’s statement about your artwork.

(e) Submit your artwork in digital format or allow digital photographs to be taken of your artwork (original artwork will be returned)

If you say YES, then your participation in the individual interview will last for 45-60 minutes at a mutually agreed upon date, time, and location. The journal entry and artwork may be completed on your own. Approximately ten individuals will be participating in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

To participate in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older and should have participated in a dream work group within the last 9 months that used the Ullman method (see description above) as a foundation.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: If you decide to participate in this study, then you may face a risk of becoming aware of and/or disclosing personal insights that may cause you discomfort. To reduce these risks, the researcher emphasizes that you are completely in charge of the amount or content of the information that you share. You will not be pressured or required to share private information. You may pass on any question that you choose not to answer. You will be given the contact information for two licensed therapists, who also specialize in individual and group dream work (in person and by telephone), in the case that material surfaces that you wish or need to explore further.

And, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS:

The main benefit to you for participating in this study is that you will be provided a packet of basic art supplies that you may use to create the visual artwork, and that will be yours to keep.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained about you in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations and publications, but the researcher will not identify you. Any personally identifying information about you or group members, such as names, places, or events, will be omitted, disguised, or digitally altered in the final report of this research.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study at any time.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer harm as a result of participation in this research project, you may contact the Responsible Principal Investigator, Radha Horton-Parker, Ph.D. at 757-683-3326, or Dr. Nina Brown, Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at 757-683-3245, or Dr. George Maihafer, the current IRB chair at 757-683-6028 at Old Dominion University, who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them: Radha Horton-Parker, Ph.D., 757-683-3326, or Penny Makris, M.A., 910-728-9346

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Nina Brown, Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at 757-683-3245 or Dr. George Maihafer, the current IRB chair, at 757-683-6028, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's

questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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APPENDIX B**Demographics**

Female _____ Male _____ Transgendered _____

Race _____

Ethnicity _____

Age _____

Occupation _____

Are you currently in a dream work group? Yes _____ No _____

If "Yes", how long have you been in the group? _____

If "No", when was your most recent experience in a dream group (mm/yy) ? _____

Approximately how many group dream work sessions have you participated in? _____

My dream group was facilitated by (check all that apply)

_____ A therapist (a licensed counselor, psychologist, social worker, or psychiatrist)

_____ An academic professional

_____ A trained lay facilitator

_____ A peer or peers

_____ Other _____

How long have you been working with your dreams on your own, in individual sessions, and/or in a group? _____

APPENDIX C

Individual Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study of group dream work. For about the next 60 minutes, I would like to talk with you about your experience of working with dreams in the dream group. Please share only what you feel comfortable with, and if at any time you do not wish to answer a particular question, you may just say “pass.” Do you have any questions before we start?

- If I had never heard of dream work or working with dreams, how would you describe a session of group dream work to me?
 - How would you describe it from the viewpoint of a person sharing a dream?
 - How would you describe it from the viewpoint of a group member working with another person’s dream?
- What is your experience of the process of working *with your own dreams* in the dream group?
 - What are your feelings? Thoughts? Physical body sensations? Physical actions?
 - What is your experience of actually telling the dream out loud?
 - How do you experience the relationship with group members?
 - How do you experience the group facilitator or leader?
- What is your experience of the process of working *with another group member’s dream*?
 - What are your feelings? Thoughts? Body sensations? Physical actions?
 - What is your experience of responding to other group members’ dreams?
 - How do you experience the relationship with group members?

- How do you experience the group facilitator or leader?
- What parts of the dream work process stand out for you?
 - What experiences from the dream work process are vivid or alive?
- What, if any, has been your experience of the most beneficial part of group dream work for you?
- What, if any, parts of the process have been unhelpful to you?
- What if, any, is your experience of the group dream work outside of the dream group?

(Relating to events, people, or life situations outside of the dream group)

- What experiences do you have from working with *your* dreams?
 - What are your thoughts? Feelings? Actions? Relationship with group members?
- What experiences do you have from working with *others'* dreams?
 - What are your thoughts? Feelings? Actions? Relationship with group members?
- What are your experiences of the structure of the dream group?
 - What is your experience of the size of group? Length of session? Overall time duration (ongoing, week-end, time-limited)?
- If you could describe a relationship with your dreams, what would it be like?
 - What thoughts, feelings, and/or interactions do you experience with your dreams?
- If you could describe a relationship with group members' dreams, what would it be like?

- What thoughts, feelings, and/or interactions do you experience with group members' dreams?
- Is there anything else that is important to you about working with your dreams that you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX D

Journal and Artwork Prompts The Experience of the Process of Group Dream Work

Journal Reflective Writing Prompt:

Describe and write your reflections about a specific experience in working with dreams in the group that was especially meaningful or significant for you (write for 15-20 minutes or up to one or two pages).

What was it about this experience that gave it special meaning?

(If you keep a regular dream response journal, you may submit a previously written journal entry.)

Artwork Creation Prompt:

With the art materials you were given, or with materials of your own, make a creative response to your overall experience of the process of working with dreams in the dream group. This may be a design of shapes, lines, or colors, a drawing, a collage, a painting, or any combination of these elements.

After you have finished your creative response, write a brief (up to one page) reflective artist's statement (e.g., what this artwork means for you, the thoughts and feelings you were having as you created it, or what message it might have for you or others).

APPENDIX E

Journal Entries: Significant & Meaningful Experiences of Group Dream Work

<p>Participant #1: Treasure Hunter</p> <p><i>(own dream)</i></p>	<p>The first dream I had after her (<i>participant's younger sister</i>) involved me thinking (mistakenly) that I had drowned a baby. It was...a very emotional dream...and by talking about and hearing projections from the group about the images in the dream, I was able to feel considerably more at peace about my sister's death. It helped assuage any lingering guilt I had about the possibility of me having any power over changing her life's course. I felt more clarity around the family 'role' I played...and the deep emotional impact on me...</p>
<p>Participant #2: Investigator</p> <p><i>(group member's dream)</i></p>	<p>The dream involved a large forest animal's death, and the ritual preparation of the animal's body after death by Native Americans. By the time we finished talking about the symbolism and his associations and went through the 'If this were my dream' process, there was just utter silence. We all knew we were in the presence of something profound.</p> <p>I learned that (<i>dreamer's name</i>) died a few months later...it became clear what the dream was about, the end of his own life...I'll never forget it.</p>
<p>Participant #3: Sacred Space Dream Worker</p> <p><i>(group member's dream)</i></p>	<p>Tonight we worked (<i>group member's</i>) dream It was particularly powerful for all of us.</p> <p>The setting is in the overwhelming beauty and majesty of the natural world... They are lost in the landscape and she feels desperate and intent on getting to a place where they do not feel isolated. She approaches a river. The water is choppy, there is turbulence. Her grandmother from the shore attempts to pull her back, reaching out her hand and falls in, disappearing in the water.</p> <p>We talked about..... Generations and passage of time. Letting go of what's familiar (the shore or the grandmother) and what's stood the test of time. The risk of leaving the shore without knowing what's ahead.</p> <p>I feel anchored by the overwhelming enormity and beauty of the mountains. It reinforces the notion of the grand spirit, of something greater than myself.</p> <p>Aha's for me lay in considering...here I am again in a major life</p>

	transition – reintegrating as a “couple”, moving, shifting work and locations.
Participant #4: Compassionate Dream Worker <i>(own dream)</i>	<p>I reported on a significant lucid dream.</p> <p>Rxxx and I went to a late movie and parked on the top floor of the... mall lot. When we returned...we...jumped in our car. I backed out and the car bumped over something big...I got out to see...it was a street person.</p> <p>‘No, this is not acceptable!’ Rxxx has been under a lot of stress lately with the death of two family members. This is not fair to her! I will just have to do this over with a different result.</p> <p>We came out of the theater (again) and hopped in the car...I backed out and the car bumped over something big. I...got out and saw that it was a bundle of old rags...OK!</p>
Participant #5: Integrator <i>(whole group experience)</i>	<p>There are times when as a group, we pause in a kind of silence. Perhaps only for a moment. But it is the kind of silence that arises when the moment is rich with transcendent experience.</p>
Participant #6: Catalyst <i>(from interview- did not submit journal entry)</i>	<p>...all my dreams really (<i>laugh</i>) – some of them there is kind of a lot – killing in the dreams and shooting and a lot of running away and things. ... and people came and gave their thoughts on it and said “Well, if it was my dream, etc. etc.” It was kind of like “Oh Wow!” It changed my whole way that I looked at it and also what to do about it.</p>
Participant #7: Energizer <i>(own dream)</i>	<p>I shared a dream at dream group that was really emotional for me... I was scared and couldn't move- like quick sand I felt like I was drowning or suffocating in the mud. The pinnacle scene in the dream I understood to be a moment when I was confronted with the children I had lost the previous year...The essential awakening was recognizing that I had finally connected to my sorrow and fear surrounding my infertility.</p>

VITAE

Penny Makris earned an A.B. degree in Art Education in 1973 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and an M.A. degree in Counseling in 1980 from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. In 2003, she returned to Appalachian State University to complete a graduate certificate in Expressive Arts Therapy. Penny worked for 27 years in the public schools primarily as an art teacher and school counselor. Through the Community Art School and the Department of Human Development and Psychological Counseling at Appalachian State University, she developed and implemented expressive arts therapy classes and workshops for older adults, for a residential facility for abused children, for an adult day care program, and for Masters level counseling students.

Penny is a national certified counselor and is currently working as a senior clinician and resident in counseling at a community behavioral healthcare center in Virginia. She is a member of the American Counseling Association and has attended as well as presented and co-presented at national, regional, and state level conferences on topics including positive aging, group dream work, end-of-life issues in counseling, and using creative and expressive arts in counseling.